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OF ONTARIO

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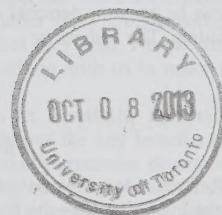
Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 3 October 2013

Jeudi 3 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 3 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 3 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm pleased to stand again this morning and continue the remarks I was making yesterday afternoon when it comes to Bill 91.

Speaker, I'll talk a little bit about what Bill 91 is. Bill 91 is, first and foremost, enabling legislation. It allows the government to set diversion targets and enforceable standards for producers to meet.

It creates the Waste Reduction Authority to enforce waste reduction activities. The bill will allow for the phase-out of industry-funded organizations like Stewardship Ontario, while still allowing producers to band together and form intermediaries to meet waste diversion targets. In this case, intermediaries are third party service providers or administrative organizations.

Bill 91 allows municipalities to register with the Waste Reduction Authority, thus obligating producers to pay municipalities for the collection and recycling of designated materials like paint, packaging and batteries. Under Bill 91, fees paid for municipal collection are negotiated by municipalities and producers. If a compromise between municipalities and producers cannot be reached, the new Waste Reduction Authority can arbitrate or set compensation payments.

Bill 91 prevents retailers from applying a separate eco fee to products. In other words, it requires all-in or integrated pricing, which is a good thing. It expands waste diversion to the institutional, commercial and industrial sector—called the ICI sector—to designate materials like printed paper and packaging, and it allows the govern-

ment to put in place disposal bans on designated materials.

Before I get into the details of my impressions of Bill 91, it's important to say that the Waste Reduction Act is a big piece of legislation. It's pretty complex, and it is a complex issue that we have to address here. It's a serious and complicated problem, but the complexities have been largely a creation of this government.

I want to recognize the many stakeholders who have taken the time to meet with me to discuss the legislation. Actually, at this moment, I also I want to take a moment to give special thanks to one of our researchers with the NDP caucus, Michael Polanyi, for the hard work that he's done on unpacking this legislation with me. Everyone who's had the chance to work with Michael Polanyi knows he is quite simply the best. We all appreciate his integrity, his brilliant mind and his dedication to make this world a better place through good public policy, and so I appreciate his help that he's given me.

Speaker, this legislation is complex. No legislation is going to be perfect, but it's clear to me that we can't go backwards in this case, that we must work with all members of this House to send this legislation to committee, to hear from people across this province and the stakeholders across Ontario to work out the kinks in the legislation and get it right.

We must move forward. Bill 91 is a step forward, and so I do support it. I do wish the Tories would roll up their sleeves and engage in this debate and work on making improvements in committee, rather than simply voting against this bill; I'm hopeful that they will. I hope that the minister is committed to working with us to make it better, too.

But before we speak about its shortfalls, let's talk about the benefits of Bill 91. One of the key benefits of Bill 91 is that it has the potential to increase diversion rates in our province by enabling the government to set strong material-specific targets for recycling and diversion. Obviously, this is the most important thing. Here are the environmental implications and our track record when it comes to waste diversion—and the fact that this province sits last in the country at achieving waste diversion goals. It's clear that we need strong targets and we need real timelines to turn things around in this province.

In 2004, the Liberal Minister of the Environment announced that the government's intention was to develop a strategy for Ontario that would divert 60% of the province's waste from disposal by 2008. That was back in 2004. Speaker, that evidently did not happen. The con-

cern here, however, is that there is some uncertainty over what these targets will be and what will be the timeline for their achievement. All of this will have to be set through regulation, which raises a few concerns that I will mention in a bit. But clearly, without targets and timelines, we have not been able to progress forward, and so it's important that, moving forward, the province does set these targets as part of the act.

Another welcomed part of this act is to finally focus attention on the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, because we all know it is a sector that is mired in very low recycling rates. Only 13% from this sector is recycled, and that's shameful. Designating materials in the ICI sector will help elevate those diversion rates and get us going in the right direction.

Another benefit of the act, and one that we're happy to see, is a move away from eco fees to insist that the real costs of dealing with products is integrated into the pricing. Strangely, integrated or all-in pricing seems to be something that the Conservatives disagree with, even though this is a key component of the legislation that will create competition and drive innovation. My Conservative colleagues will likely categorize this as a tax, that an integrated price will be a tax on producers and a tax on consumers, but I'd like to know what my colleagues would say when they talk about the costs of transporting a product, whether that price should not be integrated into the price of an item when it hits the shelf. Is that also a tax, Speaker? Because the cost of properly disposing of a product should be no different than the cost of transporting it, producing it, packaging it and so on. That's why we're focused on this legislation: to make sure that industry producers actually take responsibility for the full cost, the real cost, of the package and the product that they deliver. We must move to a model of extended producer responsibility. This means that producers must take the disposal cost into consideration when they create a project. It's that simple.

Internalizing the cost creates a number of benefits that make the producers more responsible for the products they bring to market, leading to more innovation, more environmentally friendly products and less cost for consumers, municipalities and municipal taxpayers.

0910

Speaker, the recycling council did a great job of outlining the benefits of extended producer responsibility in their submission. I'd like to read a bit from their document, and I would encourage my colleagues to do the same. They say that EPR, extended producer responsibility, "applies the responsibility of end-of-life management of a product and its packaging on the producer, who is seen to have the greatest ability to reduce its"—the product's—"environmental effects."

Extended producer responsibility creates incentives like the following:

- "selection of environmentally superior materials;
- "minimization of toxic waste throughout a product's life cycle;
- "increase useful life of the product;

—"facilitation of reuse; and

—"maximization of the recovery of resources inherent to that product or package in order to give them another use."

Speaker, the Conservatives would claim that integrated costs will be a burden on taxpayers, but at the moment taxpayers are the ones who are getting it worse. They're getting dinged at the cash register by the eco fees, but their taxes are also covering the costs of diversion and disposal because municipalities have been left to manage the cost of managing waste.

Integrated pricing will help reduce consumer confusion and ensure that the environmental costs of products stay with producers and are not passed on to municipalities and taxpayers. That's why it's so important that Bill 91 actually acknowledges the municipal role in the collection of solid waste.

We are happy to see Bill 91 recognize the important role that municipalities play in waste diversion. As the Canadian Environmental Law Association has remarked, "Across Ontario, municipal governments are the 'face' of waste management for the general public, having built up years of experience and reputation. The Waste Reduction Act and strategy must recognize the value that municipalities provide in terms of public access to waste services and knowledge of public waste management."

Municipalities have made significant infrastructure investments in waste collection over the years, and they are, of course, well placed to provide curbside and other convenient waste diversion options for households, and have shown themselves to be efficient collectors of waste. On the other hand, there is a legitimate concern amongst producers that a mandated municipal role could unduly hinder the individual producer responsibility framework that makes producers responsible for some costs that they can't individually control; in this case, the obligated contracts with municipalities. This is why the determination of collection fees by the new Waste Reduction Authority must be fair and must be transparent. This tension between producers and municipalities is something that will have to be dealt with, but we believe it's important that Bill 91 recognizes the important role of municipalities in waste diversion.

Speaker, Bill 91 also encourages a greater shift toward producer responsibility by moving away from the current 50-50 cost-sharing arrangement between producers and municipalities and toward a new relationship where producers pay an increased share of the cost to run blue box programs and start to take the cost of these programs away from municipal tax rolls. This is helpful and moves us toward greater producer responsibility. But there is a lack of clarity about the time period over which the producers' share will be ramped up to 100%, and there is also no clear timetable for producers to cover 100% of the cost of disposing of municipal household hazardous waste.

Moving on, we are happy to see consideration of disposal bans in Bill 91. Disposal bans have been used in places like British Columbia and Nova Scotia. They can

be an effective tool for preventing recyclable material from going to landfill, and they can promote the innovation and investment in waste reduction that we need.

CELA and other environmental groups have said, "Bans on designated waste from disposal in a landfill or incinerator are a welcome tool for quickly reducing waste disposed, and promoting innovation and investment in improved waste reduction, reuse and recycling. The use of bans must be done carefully and with full consideration that disposal alternatives and mechanisms are in place. The process should also include accessible and effective public engagement to ensure transparency and accountability in the process."

It's important that, if implemented, viable collection options exist for banned materials, and it's important that landfill fees actually reflect the full cost of landfilling. It should not be cheaper to send waste to landfill than it is to recycle.

Speaker, having mentioned many of the benefits of this bill, I would like to speak to some of its weaknesses. Let me start by just stating some general concerns that I have with this legislation.

Like many other pieces of Liberal government legislation, Bill 91 is enabling legislation. It provides a legal framework but it leaves many of the details to be left to regulation. I mentioned this earlier when I spoke about the targets and timelines for this bill. While Bill 91 enables the government to set these, it does not mandate them to, and it doesn't set them out in legislation. This is a concerning trend that moves government decisions out of the public realm. In the case of Bill 91, there are a number of problems with this approach.

The legal text of the bill is vague, and it's unclear whether it will achieve the objective of waste reduction. There will be significant delays while regulations are developed. Considering that a significant amount of consultation has taken place before this bill, the rate of this transition seems to be quite slow.

Speaker, public input into governance is reduced since the many individuals and groups lack the resources and knowledge to monitor and engage in the process of regulation writing. The content of regulations will be a result of negotiations, and I fear that the folks with the deepest pockets—those best served by weak regulations—are those most likely to influence the content of regulations, and they'll be more likely than groups with less economic power but who seek to advocate in the broader public interest.

Although this bill leaves much to regulation, the complexity and massiveness of this bill is somewhat shocking. All parties—municipalities, producers, consumers—need a simple and effective system. Producer responsibility is the right way to go. The government has a responsibility to make it as workable as possible for companies, and if not, they are setting us up for failure. As I said before, we need to make sure that Bill 91 works for producers, for service providers and municipalities.

One of the most clearly articulated concerns that I've heard is the concern that the framework created by this

bill will put producers and municipalities at odds with one another. Municipalities have raised concerns about the complexity and burden of having to negotiate hundreds of thousands of agreements with producers and intermediaries, and producers are concerned that they do not have the freedom to choose a service provider and yet they must meet the designated material management obligations.

The Ontario Waste Management Association also recognizes the potential negative impacts of a mandated municipal role and has committed to bringing forward potential amendments with the goal of ensuring "the least impact on open and competitive markets for stewards and service providers, as well as accessible and convenient diversion options for residents."

AMO has suggested the idea of a municipal clearing house that could facilitate this, and this is something that also deserves careful consideration. I'm looking forward to fully exploring solutions that are being proposed by municipalities, producers and service providers.

Another point of concern is the lack of vision for this bill. Bill 91 seems to have lost the vision of zero waste that the government has spoken about in the past. Bill 91 doesn't mention the aim of achieving zero waste or the goal of protecting the environment and human health.

We should keep in mind that the longer-term goal of this act should be to move towards making this a province in which goods that are not safely recyclable are no longer sold in Ontario.

Bill 91 also doesn't recognize the importance of the hierarchy of the three Rs: to reduce, reuse and recycle. As such, it doesn't give priority to waste reduction, nor does it encourage higher orders of recycling that promote the best use of a material. Recycling a glass bottle into a glass bottle should be given priority over a glass bottle being crushed to use as a roadbed. It's just common sense.

The bill also fails to encourage reuse—for example, through refillable deposit return container systems—and to prioritize these over recycling. If you look across the country, you'll see that provinces with deposit return systems have far higher rates of diversion than those without.

0920

The current act does little to encourage an expanded role for the LCBO or the Beer Store, which are huge successes when it comes to recycling. They're also big job creators in this province. We should focus on enhancing the deposit return system for wine bottles. This is something that the Blue Green alliance has called for. This would create green jobs and reduce waste. And it could even provide a market advantage to the Ontario wine industry.

Adding clear definitions of waste reduction, reuse, recycling and disposal would also strengthen this act. There is widespread concern about the lack of specifics in Bill 91 when it comes to monitoring and enforcing high standards of waste management and recycling services. Bill 91 does not clearly indicate that the Waste Reduction Au-

thority has the authority to monitor or enforce standards in these services.

The Ontario Waste Management Association has highlighted this as a concern with Bill 91. They say:

"The lack of proper oversight and enforcement of recycling standards in stewardship programs has been an area of continued concern. Under the proposal, producers would provide much of the oversight and enforcement of the Waste Reduction Act through commercial and contractual arrangements....

"The new enforcement regime is fatally deficient as it fails to provide any oversight and compliance function relative to recycling standards for waste service providers for designated materials. Producers should not be made to be enforcers of waste reduction or waste service standards vis-à-vis waste service providers."

Speaker, if these standards are worth enforcing, they are worth enforcing directly against all parties who are responsible for carrying them out, including waste service providers.

RCO, the Recycling Council of Ontario, has also highlighted this as a problem. They suggest that "the WRA include provisions that assign government responsibility to establish minimum operational standards for each of the targeted products/materials designated under the legislation through regulation and add a role for the Waste Reduction Authority to manage an auditing program that monitors compliance against those standards. The WRA should also establish a registrar of public and private service providers to track compliance and provide a directory to obligated producers to assist them in managing their liability."

Speaker, it's clear that it can't be left to producers to both meet recycling obligations and certify and inspect recycling facilities. This just does not work. Not only is it burdensome, but they obviously lack the incentive to uphold rigorous standards.

If there are inadequate regulations and standards imposed on recyclers and waste processors, then the goals of waste reduction will not be met, and municipalities and taxpayers will end up continuing to subsidize the end-of-life product costs. If recycling standards are weak or unenforced, then batteries will simply be shipped to the United States to be smelted, reducing the jobs and the economic opportunities in Ontario. If sharps end up in landfills or recycling bins, they can cause costly jam-ups at municipal conveyor belts, adding costs to municipalities and municipal taxpayers.

As groups like the Canadian Environmental Law Association indicated in their submission on the act, "Regulations need to be set by the government of Ontario to outline operation standards and provide definitions of recycling."

Another concern that has been raised centres around the effectiveness and transparency of the Waste Reduction Authority. Is it the right approach for the Ministry of the Environment to transfer enforcement powers to a new authority that ensures compliance of producers and recyclers, or is this enforcement better done by the ministry

itself? We know what the Conservatives have to say on this matter; they've spoken out about this. But I'm not sure about their solution, which is to get rid of the Waste Reduction Authority, scrap the act and go back to stage 1. I'm not sure that that is the correct one, that we should throw the baby out with the bathwater.

Groups like the Canadian Environmental Law Association have raised concerns that transferring enforcement to the authority will reduce the independence and fairness of prosecutors under the act. Prosecutors in the Ministry of the Environment are accountable to the Attorney General to ensure that there is no political interference in prosecutions conducted by the crown, and the Attorney General is accountable to the Legislature. But, Speaker, delegating enforcement to this new agency could undermine this accountability structure and remove important procedural requirements, such as disclosure.

A look at the history of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority shows the risks and deficiencies of outsourcing inspection and enforcement to an agency. Therefore, the Canadian Environmental Law Association and others believe that enforcement of the law is a core government function and that it should not be transferred to a delegated administrative authority.

A further question is whether the Waste Reduction Authority will have the resources to monitor and audit compliance of waste diversion practices and have an adequate number of inspectors with sufficient authority to conduct inspections. We have seen in other sectors, such as unlicensed home daycares, for example, how toothless some government inspectors are, and we don't want to see this repeated in this act. The Waste Reduction Authority needs real auditing powers and real capacities, and for that it needs to be adequately resourced.

The Ontario Waste Management Association has raised concerns that the Waste Reduction Authority is not empowered to fully oversee the Waste Reduction Act. The act is not clear as to whether the Waste Reduction Authority can enforce standards for all participants, and this must be made clear in legislation and should not be left up to regulation.

Additionally, Speaker, some observers have suggested that the Waste Reduction Authority, as constituted under Bill 91, is not sufficiently open or accountable. They suggest that it should be placed under the freedom-of-information act and that it should be subject to review by a parliamentary committee, the Environment Bill of Rights and the Ombudsman Act. This makes good sense to me; I think we've all seen what happens in cases like this.

The authority is open to assessment by the Auditor General, but we know that the auditor has limited resources to fully monitor every agency. We know how lack of accountability of government agencies like Ornge, eHealth and the Ontario Power Authority has cost Ontario billions of dollars during the current Liberal regime. This is a mistake we cannot afford to repeat in this legislation.

Bill 91 also does not seem to address the lack of uniformity of recycling services across Ontario. This chal-

lenges how governments will encourage the expansion of designated materials that are collected. Consistency of recycling programs is important for simplicity's sake and for comprehensiveness. Residents across Ontario, including small and remote communities, should have access to waste diversion options for a similar range of products and materials as residents of larger urban communities. A confusing or fragmented waste management system will not allow us to meet our waste diversion targets. Moreover, to reduce waste, there needs to be a clear timetable to designate additional materials province-wide. For example, new types of e-waste, durable goods and other recyclable materials that are not currently collected in blue boxes need to be designated.

Also, organic waste is one of the largest categories of waste, and there is an urgent need for the government to develop a strategy to support municipalities across Ontario to operate green bin programs. The government strategy calls for a four-year phase-in of organics collection, but I feel like that is just too slow. Government needs to play an active role to educate the public about diverting green waste, and government needs to provide incentives for industry to invest in the infrastructure that will allow the expansion of the green bin and the recycling of additional materials across Ontario.

Speaker, as you can tell, there is an extensive list of real concerns that relate to Bill 91. I'd like to mention just a few more, though. First, Bill 91 does little to work with other provinces or the federal government to set timetables that would reduce packaging. I've heard from a number of stakeholders who point out that our borders are open and that we need the province to harmonize with other jurisdictions. Instead, though, Bill 91 relies on the incentives of individual producer responsibility, which may not be enough, on its own, to push producers to reduce unnecessary packaging. It should be remembered that packaging still accounts for 70% of the waste that goes to landfill, and we are far behind places like Germany when it comes to reducing packaging.

0930

Another concern in this bill is that the government mentions the creation of new intermediaries. These are third party service providers or administrative organizations that allow producers to band together collectively to meet waste diversion targets. We need to make sure that we do not simply just recreate the problems that we have right now, where intermediaries have increased costs and fees for consumers and evaded accountability. By introducing the role of intermediaries in the bill, there is a danger that individual producers may be able to continue to off-load responsibility to third party bodies, and there is also a danger that the recognition of intermediaries will lead us down the road to the privatization of waste collection services, that it will undermine standards, accountability and convenience for families.

Speaker, this bill does not seem to do enough to ensure that producers are responsible for the waste produced by all the products in all sectors and to all clients in all regions of Ontario. Producers must be responsible

for all the products and packaging that they sell, regardless of where it's sold, who the consumer is or where it's disposed. Producers who sell in remote markets must be responsible for the cost of collecting and recycling those goods. For example, a producer should not be allowed to meet their recycling quotas by only collecting in easy-to-reach urban regions. We must ensure that all regions of Ontario are treated equally and fairly. Individual producer responsibilities should mean that producers are responsible not just for the reduction, reuse and recycling of products but also for the disposal of products that cannot be recovered. But what does Bill 91 do to prevent the cost of disposal from simply being dumped onto municipalities and taxpayers?

Many people have worked hard to improve our systems over the years and to reduce waste. I want to thank many of the stakeholders for their hard work and I want to encourage them to keep pushing to make the system work.

I hope it's clear from my remarks that there is a lot of hard work ahead of us but that New Democrats are here and ready to get to work on this.

The NDP has a proven record on promoting waste diversion in Ontario. The NDP government played an important role in the advancement of recycling in this province with our comprehensive 1991 waste reduction action plan and our 1994 regulations governing municipal waste, ICI waste, composting and product packaging. By 1992, the NDP government had already met the 1989 targets of diverting 25% of solid waste from disposal facilities, and we passed the regulation in 1994 which required the blue box programs to be set up in municipalities across the province to recycle aluminum, glass, newsprint, plastic bottles and steel containers.

Since then, as we know, waste diversion rates have stagnated. That's a long time ago. That's going back to the NDP government. I was in high school the last time we had an NDP government here in Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I was in diapers.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Taras was in diapers.

In 1995, the Conservative government ended provincial subsidies for the blue box program, dumping the costs onto municipalities and municipal taxpayers. I think this is one of the hypocrisies that has to be pointed out. The tax fighters—the Conservatives—are all too willing to subsidize their corporate friends and push those costs down to municipalities—and ultimately paid for by municipal taxpayers.

In 2002, the Waste Diversion Act imposed a 50-50 cost-sharing of the blue box program between producers and municipalities, but this didn't end the fighting between municipalities and producers.

As I mentioned earlier, in 2004 Liberal environment minister Leona Dombrowsky announced the government's intention to develop a strategy for Ontario that would divert 60% of the province's waste from disposal by 2008. Again, this is going back to 2004. I don't remember the announcement but I'm sure it looked good on television: a promise to reduce waste—and nothing has

happened since then. It's clear the Liberal government has failed quite spectacularly on this front.

I'm happy to see Minister Bradley introduce this legislation. We are happy to work on it, we're happy to work to improve it, and I believe that the people of this province will be happy if we all get to work on this. As I had mentioned earlier, there's no doubt in my mind that the people of this province care about our environment and they want to do their part to make it more sustainable. The problem is that the people are ahead of the politicians when it comes to this issue. The kids in my riding are ahead of the adults on this issue, and they're definitely ahead of the politicians.

In my riding, there are a number of community groups and organizations that are doing remarkable work when it comes to environmental protection. Just recently, the Premier was actually in Davenport at an incredible organization called FoodShare that's been working to try to make that connection from field to table. They have been strong advocates for more sustainable food systems and food access. I was excited just a few weeks ago to go to FoodShare for what I thought was a new announcement by the Premier, but in fact it was just a reannouncement of something that was in the budget. Nevertheless, FoodShare is just one of these groups that have inspired the imagination of our community and are reaching out to people across the province to talk about food justice and food access. But they are largely doing this without any kind of support from the province or from any level of government. It's organizations like FoodShare that are doing this work. If only they had the support of provincial and federal and municipal dollars, more of that support, think about the health impacts and the environmental impacts, the greater impacts that they could have.

Less formally organized groups are also doing this work. We have community gardens in schools across the riding and across Ontario, in Earlscourt Park and Dufferin Grove Park. Last Friday, I had a tour from a young man who wanted to show me the kind of urban farms that he has started on his own with his friends, to farm people's backyards that are not being used right now, to put them into food production, to grow that food and intentionally share it around with the community. We have organizations like Not Far From the Tree who are doing this work more formally, who are helping to harvest backyard trees for seniors and people who are no longer able to pick their fruit. They will voluntarily come and pick that fruit off the tree and share it with the owners in the house, but also share it among themselves and bring it to food programs across the city.

Speaker, every Friday at Dufferin Grove Park we have community suppers. These save energy by having people work together. We have community free stores. These are individual projects where people are meeting in the park to exchange goods free of cost. This means that things are avoiding the dumpster.

We have a ward 18 cycling advocacy group. A ward 17 cycling group is being formed right now. These are cycling advocates who are going out there and doing

their part to try to build new cycling infrastructure in our city and across our province. They've been pivotal in trying to push the provincial government to actually take a position when it comes to building more active transportation. They have had work to do just to protect some of the existing cycling infrastructure that we have—cycling infrastructure on Dupont, on Rogers Road. Those are in place at this moment because of the work of individuals.

We also have, as I mentioned, a lot of young people who are interested in these issues. Last spring I had the chance to meet with students from St. Helen public school and speak to members of their environmental club. These kids talked to me for an hour about the benefits of just having a bicycle rack in their school. The debate in that classroom was better, often, than the debate here. They told me quite clearly about the economic benefits, the difficulties that students have affording transit in this city and why cycling would help them to get to school. They talked about the impacts on their learning of getting some exercise each day. I volunteered to work with them to actually get the cycling infrastructure that they need, but I reminded them that just because they're right doesn't mean that they are going to get what they want. It's going to take a fight, and we're going to continue to work with those students at St. Helen to make sure they get a bike rack in their schoolyard, so that they have a place to lock up their bikes when they come to school in the morning.

0940

It's clear to me that people in this province want to be environmental stewards, but we also need governments to do their part to make this province sustainable. Many of us are New Democrats because of our concern for the environment, and we know that we have an important role to play when it comes to protecting our environment. Too often our governments gets their accounting wrong, and it's not just about the kind of faulty math when it comes to power plants and so forth, but it's the governments that forget to count our air and our soil and water as some of our greatest assets, and a source of our greatest wealth.

Unlike some governments in this country, the NDP doesn't see our natural resources simply as stock that we can sell off the shelf as fast as possible. We understand the true costs and the true benefits of our natural environment, and we understand its precious value and the value of managing it carefully.

I have a lot of respect for the Minister of the Environment. He's a strong environmentalist, and I'm happy that he has brought forward this bill—you know, 10 years after the government was formed, but I'm glad that he's here now. I think it must be hard to be an environmentalist with the Liberal Party, because they like to speak about their green brand. I think they want to be green, they wish they were green, but at the end of the day, they're always too beholden to their corporate interests.

Interjection: There's a song about that: "Wishing and hoping...."

Mr. Jonah Schein: Exactly. So what kind of green do they want to be? What kind of green do they want?

As we've seen debate this last week around who gets their priorities put first in this Legislature, too often it's the people with the most green, the most money. It becomes difficult for the Liberal Party, as government, to ever chart a clear environmental path, because they get taken off course. They cozy up with business, and that's what they've done in the last 10 years when it comes to this file. And so they have left industry to regulate itself, to set the rules, and we've seen what the costs have been to the consumers. Consumers are paying more and more for products, and some consumers would be okay to pay a little bit more for products, but what's unacceptable is that they have done absolutely nothing to actually protect the environment, and so waste reduction targets have stagnated and have not moved forward.

But in the long run, when I speak to the producers and to businesses, they don't actually enjoy this kind of governance that the Liberal government offers, because it's unpredictable, too. The Liberals themselves, I think, are internally divided about how to approach things. They want to be green, but they also want to leave things driven by the market.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's like the Endangered Species Act.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I've got the attention of the minister.

When you talk to industry, they would rather know the direction that the government is going to move in, and they would rather know, "These are the rules," and that there is a predictable future ahead of them. Business is okay with enforcement, they're okay with having clear guidelines, but what they don't like is moving targets. They don't like to wake up and see that the government of the day is making a decision based on their own political interests. So they've changed the rules of the game, Speaker. They've stood up and created a good headline for themselves, but they have thrown business into chaos.

On the other side, you know, we have Conservatives in this country, and their approach is clear. Their approach is everyone for themselves; you know, come in, deregulate, plunder, and business obviously enjoys that for the time being, but this is not good for business in the long run.

An NDP approach is different. We support business. We want to make sure that this is a thriving place where people can make a living, but we also understand that we need strong rules in place to make sure that there are actually resources there in the future, and we have a role to see the big picture and to manage those resources. Business understands this too, and they just want to know what we expect and want to make sure that we stick to it. Rather than allowing business to run things themselves, we want to have a role. We want a say on behalf of the people of this province.

The people of this province want to make sure that we're not landfilling everything, Speaker. They want to

make sure that safe products are coming to market. They also want to make sure that they've got money left at the end of the day to take care of their families, and so they don't want to be paying the costs of companies producing waste. We think we have to set the targets, and I've clearly heard from business that if we set the targets, if we let them know that these products must be recycled, they will meet those targets. They are willing to do that.

I think that this is the approach that we have to take. We're blessed to live in this province. We're blessed to live in this country. We've got tremendous natural resources, but we can't just sell the store. Unfortunately that's what we are seeing with the federal government right now, where the store is open for business and they're selling it as fast as possible.

All of us are not going to be around forever. The government is not going to be the government forever. The opposition is not going to be the opposition forever. We won't be the third party forever, and we won't be on this planet forever. But we need to make sure that we're protecting our resources in the long run.

When it comes to the environment, we need to make sure that we provide the opportunity for individuals to do the right thing. As I said, in Davenport, individuals do want to do the right thing, but it's going to take more than individual action to protect our environment. It requires collective action; it requires a framework put in place by government that allows things to function.

I think that people would be absolutely dismayed; kids at St. Helen's would be absolutely dismayed; I think that my parent's generation, who have seen the introduction of blue box bins, would be dismayed to know that the work they do to take their recycling out to the curb and to buy more responsible products—that in fact so much of this is still going to landfill, and that even when they do their best, there has not been any regulation in place to make sure that industrial and commercial waste is being reused and recycled, Speaker. We are letting the people of this province down.

This bill—I'm really happy that we're talking about this here. It is of critical environmental importance, but it's also incredibly important to our economy. We will put seven people to work for every one person who's currently employed to throw out garbage, to reuse it, to recycle it. We are going to put people to work, and that's what we should be doing.

I think I've just about used up my time here today. I'm looking forward to debate on this. We've seen a number of issues take precedence here in this Legislature, and the ones that have been prioritized most have been ones that are most troubling to me, quite honestly, Speaker. Bill 115, which was horrible legislation, was forced through this House. That's the fastest I've seen anything move in this Parliament until I saw this bill around supporting one company.

Yet we have real issues that need to be brought forward, and this is one of those issues. I'm hopeful that this will be prioritized, that we'll have thorough debate, that we'll do our best to get this issue to committee, that we'll

continue to work with stakeholders, that these issues are not entirely left up to regulation, that people have a chance for input, and that we turn this around.

This is something that's manageable. There's no reason that our diversion rates should be stuck at 25%. There's no reason this has not budged since there was an NDP government 20 years ago, Speaker. This is not a pie-in-the-sky idea; this is something that we can take action on and that we should take action on.

This is waste squared. This is a waste of time. This has been a waste of energy. This has been a waste of garbage and a waste of potential for us to do far better and for us to create good jobs in the province of Ontario.

I'm going to end my remarks there, and I look forward to hearing comments from other folks around the House, Speaker.

0950

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want to commend the member on the extremely thoughtful and constructive approach that he has taken to this legislation, where he has dealt with the provisions that are found within the bill. I certainly appreciate that approach.

As I mentioned yesterday, I think it's an opportunity for all of us to work together as legislators on a specific piece of legislation, and where there is need for improvement, we will have that improvement.

Mr. Hargreave and Mr. Cook of the Ontario Waste Management Association are in the gallery today. They have been extremely helpful and constructive in their approach. I'm sure they don't agree with absolutely everything that's in the bill at this time, and they will make further presentation when it gets to committee.

I think, again, the approach that we want to take is one which is, at the same time, extremely effective and places the costs where they should be, in terms of those being on the producer as opposed to the grateful taxpayer.

One of the reasons that we chose a Waste Reduction Authority was that that authority, of course, would be financed by those who actually produce the waste in the first place, the products that eventually have to be dealt with in the first place. When you stick it with the grateful taxpayer—that is, if you have the Ministry of the Environment doing all of that—then you'll find that it's the taxpayer who is assuming that particular cost.

I think there are details that the member has appropriately pointed out that will be dealt with at the time of committee consideration. I'll be interested in both the parties' presentations at that time in committee, and their suggestions on how the bill can be improved, because I'm not aware of any legislation that has come forward that is absolutely perfect.

I think the approach taken by the critic for the New Democratic Party is one that we should have on much of the legislation that comes before the House.

I do want to challenge him on one part of it, and that was when he was talking about the NDP being environmentalists. I have noted, along with many in the environ-

mental community, that there has been a right turn for the NDP towards allowing populism to trump environmentalism. I know the member, within his own caucus, would be trying to encourage his colleagues to once again put environmentalism first and populism perhaps second or third.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: I too would also like to thank two important stakeholders who I know have been the driving force behind this: Rob Cook and Peter Hargreave, from the OWMA. I look forward to our continued relationship.

I do want to respond to the NDP's critic, as I feel the member seems to be getting the strategy and the bill mixed up. The industrial, commercial and institutional sector is not in the act; it's in the strategy. Disposal bans would be under the Environmental Protection Act, so the government doesn't need Bill 91 to introduce bans. I just want to get that on the record.

I hear the member's concerns about accountability and oversight. The member says that Waste Diversion Ontario is toothless and totally unaccountable. We agree with that. We agree that giving WDO a new name doesn't change the situation.

But, as the member noted, what is most troubling to see is that the government wants to concede enforcement powers to WDO, which would be called the Waste Reduction Authority under Bill 91. It makes no sense to hand over enforcement powers to an organization that operates like Omge and eHealth. That's why we've called on the Liberals to establish a direct line of accountability between the government and producers. That means the Ministry of the Environment should regulate the industry, not an unaccountable agency.

In fact, the Canadian Environmental Law Association agrees with us. They don't agree with the NDP. CELA says enforcement and compliance of the industry must remain in the ministry's hands, because "enforcement of environmental standards is a core government function."

The member also says he's against eco taxes, yet he failed to notice that Bill 91 continues every single eco tax program. In fact, the member for Davenport didn't even talk about winding down any of these eco tax programs. The member seems all too eager to force Ontario consumers to foot 100% of the bill for the blue box program while promising no property tax offset. That means Ontarians will get no relief on their tax bills while having to pay for new costs when they go to the supermarket or local department store.

I'll conclude it there, and I'll look forward to speaking to this again.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to applaud my colleague the member for Davenport, who is a passionate defender of the environment on all fronts and certainly within the context of Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. I think he spoke eloquently today about the need to actually put

something forward that offers stability not only to industry and producers, but also to the people who have to deal with our waste every day—municipalities, citizens—who are looking for a government that actually leads and promotes recycling and reducing waste in our communities.

I think he indicated that Bill 91 had some positive aspects to it, and potential pitfalls, which of course we know should be melded out in committee. We look forward to the testimony of various stakeholders who will come forward and tell us what the real and potential impacts of this bill will be.

But, ultimately, we know that over the last 20 years, Ontario has become the worst in terms of its record in waste reduction. Despite many attempts and overtures to actually deal with it in a tangible way, that's solely what it has become: overtures and sentiments. Kind as they may be, they have not had the positive impacts on our communities and waste reduction that we need to see.

I'm encouraged with, I guess, the producer responsibility aspect. In my area, in my riding of Essex county, there are some really innovative things happening with agriculture as it relates to waste reduction, using natural products that take the place of, I guess, the little Styrofoam popcorn things. I have a great friend, Joe Dama, who has invented a wonderful process that uses soy to make little what look like Cheetos to fill packaging. These are things that are innovative, that can be made right in our province here, and I hope this bill brings about that type of innovation and progress within our waste reduction strategy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to add my comments to Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. I want to thank the member from Davenport for his speech. It was the leadoff speech for the third party, so it was rather lengthy.

The cornerstone of this legislation is, as we know, making the individual producers responsible for recycling the products that they sell, and also to help consumers make sure there are no surprises or extra fees that are added on the products at the checkout. Basically, the price that you see advertised will be the price that you pay. I've heard many people in my riding of York South–Weston comment favourably on that. That is what they want to see. It would protect consumers from having these surprise fees at the checkout.

Additionally, diverting this waste from the landfill to recycling, as we've heard in the main speech, will create extra jobs. It will generate new factories, new jobs, new Ontario-made products, so that's very important as well.

I'm very encouraged by the fact that the ministry has been consulting extensively with a wide range of stakeholders: environmental groups, municipalities, producers, retailers, consumers, service providers and industry funding organizations. I believe that consulting will lead to a better bill, and there is consensus, from what I understand, among the stakeholders on the need for a fundamental reform of Ontario's waste diversion framework.

So thank you, and I hope this will improve as the conversation continues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you for the comments from members across the House.

Speaker, this is not about populism. This is about doing the right thing and doing it properly. The environmental approach that the NDP wants to take is one that will actually work, so fewer press conferences, fewer headlines; we want to make sure that it works on the ground. That is the long-term, sustainable policy environment that we need to create, one that doesn't change from election to election or month to month or scandal to scandal or day to day. We want to make sure we have a clear framework in place that will protect our environment and that will set clear rules of the game so that industry knows what their obligations are and that they can take the steps that they need to innovate.

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As long as we have fairness in place, then business can do okay. As long as they know that everyone's playing by the same rules, then they can do just fine, Speaker. That will in fact create the innovation that we need to see.

But we need to make sure that people in this province have options. This isn't environmentalism just for people who can afford it. We need to make sure that everyone has environmental options, and so we need to make sure that we set policy; that when it comes to transit, for example, we actually provide people with transit options. There are some people who would say, "Well, just toll everyone. Set road tolls for everyone." You're not going to punish people out of their cars when they don't have any other option.

We're looking at a government that has been here for 10 years; it has been 20 years since the NDP was here. We have seen no public infrastructure that will allow people to make a good environmental choice when it comes to transit, and yet we have the government scolding the third party as if it's our fault, Speaker.

We need to make sure, when it comes to this issue, that we get this right, that we get the details right, that we make sure it works for commuters across the province and that we support individuals to make the good environmental choices that they want to make.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm delighted to join in the debate this morning on a bill that I think is really important, and a bill—when you think about the fact that today many of us are celebrating our 10th year in election—I know, Mr. Speaker, you are, and many others are. Certainly, it's our 10th year in government.

You look back over the last decade, and you look at how many incredibly important environmental steps we've taken through the years. We've had similar debates, like we're having on this here today, because taking those steps is never easy. It's easy to talk about it; it's a lot harder to do it. This bill is another example of that.

What this bill is about is ensuring that we establish outcome-based individual producer responsibility for the recycling and diversion of waste from landfill and that the onus would go back to the manufacturer. I think that makes sense. I think Ontarians and consumers across the province and those who really care about our environment—and, frankly, others—would recognize the importance of doing that. The challenge is, as we make these changes, you can't do it for free, and at the end of the day there is a cost to somebody in the system.

We've been trying to work very, very closely with our business community in this province on everything, because they're very, very important to our economic future, and this bill is no different. We've worked very, very closely with our manufacturers. I think most of them recognize the importance of taking responsibility for ensuring that the products they manufacture end up, at the end of the day, where they belong: in landfill—not in landfill; to be recycled. Mr. Speaker, "out of landfill" is what I'm trying to say.

This is not just good in terms of environmental opportunities; it's also good economics. When you look at it—and I was surprised to learn this—recycling generates 10 times the amount of jobs as disposal. So this is good economics; it creates jobs. Every 1,000 tonnes of recycled waste supports seven jobs.

Mr. Speaker, you're from Scarborough, and you know very well Atlantic Packaging in Scarborough. Atlantic Packaging has been a leader in recycled material for over 60 years. The member from Davenport talked about the community being ahead of politicians on this, and I think, in many ways, he's right. This company has been ahead of just about everybody on this with the technology they use. They recycle; 100% recycled paper is what they create, corrugated products that are very, very good—top quality. They take recycling to heart. It's at the centre of everything that this company does. Their recycling includes everything from old corrugated paper to plastics to office paper, boxboard and old newspapers. They're a fantastic Ontario good-news story when it comes to environmental responsibility. On top of that, they employ almost 1,000 people. So this is a real-life, real-world example of why this kind of approach is really, really important. It is good economics.

But you're going to get those who are in favour. You're going to get those who are opposed, because it's hard to do. In this Legislature, when things are hard to do, this government never walks away from those decisions. We, in fact, embrace the opportunity to bring that kind of change. But the debates in this place are very similar.

When I think back to my days at city hall, one of the things I had the privilege of being involved in—Mr. Speaker, you were there too, and you were involved in that; Betty Disero was the works chair to get it going and then I had to be responsible for implementing it as works chair—was the green bin. I remember at the time everybody said, "It's not going to work; it's going to fail. People will never do it." I'll never forget the first day it

was implemented, doing a tour of the city with our works staff and seeing something like a 97% or 98% compliance on the first day. The member for Davenport is absolutely right on issues like that. Our constituents, Ontarians, the people, were ahead of us on that and ready to move into organic separation, and green bins are seen now across the province. We were the first, in Toronto, I believe, and we're very proud of that. People embraced that right off the bat, and they still do to this day.

I remember the debate on the greenbelt. Today, everybody talks about the greenbelt as being one of the great achievements of our generation when it comes to the environment, and this government worked very, very hard to implement that. It's going to make a difference for generations to come, not just the next generation but generations after that.

We had some support from the NDP, although they tried to poke holes in it every chance they got, but we welcomed that support. They worked with us a little bit on that. The PC adamantly opposed it as they are, I believe, opposing this bill. That's very typical of their approach. If you think about it today, they're not going to admit that they opposed the greenbelt today. They know how popular it is out there. It was the right thing to do, but we had to take some political heat for doing it. Mr. Speaker, it was the right thing to do. We soldiered on, and future generations are going to benefit from it.

I think about our efforts to eliminate coal. I think of how important that is to eliminating health care costs; it's something like \$2 billion in savings per year. You think of the smog days that have now been eliminated as we're just about at that threshold of completely eliminating coal. There are very few smog days in the GTA these days. Prior to our efforts—I'm not saying it's all about eliminating coal; there are other factors, but that's one of the main factors: very few smog days.

I think of the jobs that have been created in the renewable energy field in a number of different sectors. I think to date 35,000 jobs have been created by those efforts. That's a pretty good-news Ontario story, but it wasn't easy. There were challenges. If it was easy, other jurisdictions around the world would have tackled it and done it. Ontarians are the first jurisdiction in the world to be able to wean ourselves completely off of coal, the single largest climate change initiative in North America.

The PCs, the opposition, have opposed us every step of the way. They continue to oppose us, as they oppose and try to make hay on the challenges of bringing forward new energy sources, new renewable energy of all sorts. It's not easy to be environmentally responsible. It's not easy to change your economy to the new realities of the world to ensure that, in fact, the things we're doing are sustainable. But this government has had the courage to move forward with those initiatives. To this day the PCs, and in some cases the NDP, continue to talk about being environmentally responsible but stand in our way of doing that. I think the elimination of coal is a perfect example of that.

I think of things like public transit: how important that is to our environment, helping to give people the option

of getting out of cars. Is that easy? No, Mr. Speaker, it's not. It's damned expensive. It costs a lot to be able to move to public transit, but we know we need to do that because the cost of gridlock is so much more than the investments we plan to make in the coming years and decades in public transit. But somebody in this Legislature has to be straight with the people of Ontario to tell them you can't build public transit for free.

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Everybody is for public transit in this Legislature but only one party is standing up for the fact that you need to invest to be able to build public transit. Only one party, only one leader of all the three parties is standing up and being straight with the people of Ontario to say, "You know, we're going to have to find \$50 billion over the next 15 or 20 years to be able to fund these public transit projects." The other leaders and the other parties are pretending that you don't have to do that and that it's easy, that we can build public transit without paying for it.

It's another example of the fact that being environmentally responsible requires leadership. It's not easy, but it's something that has to be done. Our government is up to that and our government will get this done. We will do what we need to do to build the public transit that the GTA and the rest of the province needs to be able to ensure that over the next five or six decades we are going to be environmentally sustainable and at the same time economically prosperous.

I think of things like conservation targets. We have the strongest, most aggressive conservation targets in all of North America. I know the member from Etobicoke—I'll say her name, because I can't remember which Etobicoke—Donna Cansfield, back 10 years ago when we started here, was an absolute advocate for conservation and pushed us very hard to ensure that we have those targets. We still have work to do in that area, but we've come a very, very long way. Demand has been reduced significantly, both in consumers' homes and in businesses across this province.

Those initiatives weren't easy, either. In fact, we took a lot of heat from the other side for every penny that we put into conservation. They support the outcomes, they talk about being in favour of conservation, but when the rubber hits the roads, Mr. Speaker, when you have to pay for these programs that actually, in the end, pay for themselves, when you have to bring that upfront cost into the programs to get them going, we had heat from both parties on the other side for taking those challenging decisions. Were they the right thing to do? Well, we're a leader in conservation in North America; I'd say they were the right thing to do.

Today, there are not a lot of Ontarians who would disagree with the fact that while some of the stuff we brought forward was new, it was cutting-edge. In some cases we were the first in the world; for instance, to bring in smart meters. That's reduced peak demand in this province. That's enabled us to not have to produce as much power. That's helped ensure that every Ontarian has the opportunity to be able to participate in conservation.

It was controversial at the time, tough at the time. Opposition parties were up in arms about the fact that we were trying to take these challenging and courageous decisions and move forward and be leaders. Well, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, I think Ontarians can see it was the right thing to do. Conservation was the right way to go. We still have more work to do, and it's still going to be challenging. And I'll guarantee you that we'll be the only party in this Legislature that stands up to keep moving on conservation. The others will talk about it, but when it comes time to doing it, when it comes time to finding the investments to be able to put in it, they simply will not be there. They won't be standing up to be counted.

This bill is exactly the same. It's a hard thing to do because it's new; it's different. It does make some changes. There are adjustments that have to be made by some of the manufacturers in our province. We're going to do the very best we can to continue to consult with the business community to ensure that that transition happens in a fair and reasonable way. But at the end of the day, this will end up creating jobs, just like all the other measures that we've taken that are environmentally friendly do, because it ensures we're building our economy on a sustainable basis. We're seeing things for what they are, ensuring that when we produce waste, somebody has to be responsible for recycling it and making sure it is properly environmentally disposed of. Recycling is the best way to do that.

I talked about the Atlantic Packaging example. In the last few minutes I have here before this debate closes off for the time being, here's a company of 60 years, owned by the Granovsky brothers, whom I know the Speaker knows well. They're very quiet people, very responsible. Here's a company that employs a thousand people in Ontario. They wouldn't exist today were it not for this government and governments past that have dedicated themselves to ensuring that recycling of paper makes sense. At the time, I'm sure, it was controversial. At the time, I'm sure, there were challenges because it was new. Today there are a thousand people working in this great company, Atlantic Packaging, recycling paper in this province and doing it in a way that I think is boosting our economy and helping to create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I see you moving there. You're starting to lean forward. I'm assuming that my time is up for now. I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. I thank the members opposite for their contribution, but I do look for both parties to support this bill because, let's be frank here, this is the right way to move, the right way to go forward. It takes us in the right direction.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I realize I don't get an opportunity to do this often, because I represent a very far northern

riding, but I'd like to introduce to the House the person who was the success in my campaigns and also my constituency office, Helen Gerteis, who is here with her friend Felicia. Helen worked for me for over 20 years—can you imagine?—and actually got to retire. Welcome Helen Gerteis, please.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: He's not here right now but he's at Queen's Park, and it's Roger Anderson, the chair of Durham region. We call him the king of Durham. We're just thrilled he's at Queen's Park today. Long live the king.

Mr. Todd Smith: We do have another visitor coming to see our great page from Prince Edward-Hastings, Ian Chapelle. His great-uncle Jack Chapelle is visiting this morning.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Joining us today at the Legislature is a school from my riding: Seneca Hill Public School. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the minister responsible for seniors and page Efua Mensimah Kwofie, her aunt Dorcas Forson. We welcome her to the Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Under the finance minister, the TO2015 CEO's \$552,000 salary was reduced by \$75,000—only once we exposed this injustice. Similarly, the Pan Am Secretariat deputy minister was removed only once we exposed his \$361,000 salary. And only once the news of unlimited entitlement broke did the Liberals agree to stricter expense policies and repayment.

You only act once you're caught, Minister. Can you tell me exactly when the unlimited expensing will be remedied and the expenses in bad faith repaid?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I also appreciate the fact that the critic has long been apprised of the activities of the Pan and Parapan American Games since the outset, when we invited him back then to participate and to recognize what it is that's being done.

He knows full well that Deloitte and others are reviewing the reports that we have, monitoring on a quarterly basis. He's well aware that as a result of the outstanding work of Infrastructure Ontario and the work we've done establishing venues across southern Ontario and the province, we have now come in under budget by \$50 million for those capital expenditures. This is going to leave a tremendous legacy for future generations in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I am well aware that the Pan Am budget is disingenuous at best. The only time a Liberal is spurred to action is by holding their feet to the fire. Yesterday, I asked the Pan Am minister about the real cost of Pan Am. He told me about chicken nuggets.

Since you previously held the portfolio, and as finance minister, the buck still stops with you. Perhaps you can tell us why you hid multiple budgets off the record of Pan Am? The ones I'm talking about specifically, Minister, are the recently discovered \$10 million for the secretariat party and paperwork, the \$709 million for another legacy venue and, no doubt, millions more for security and transportation.

Minister, how many Pan Am budgets have you approved, and what is the grand total cost of the games to the taxpayers of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I find it passing strange that the member opposite is now asking a question about Pan Am when, yesterday in estimates committee, they had two hours to ask the minister responsible for Pan Am what it is that he's—the only question that the critic had to ask, the only question in those two hours, was the following. He said to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games, “Minister, how are you?”

That was all they asked yesterday of the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. The opposition are making a complete mockery of the committee process. They are using filibustering. They are delaying the issues. They had 10 senior officials of the ministry there yesterday to deal with the very issues.

He's talking about budgets. We've been very open from the outset as to what we are doing. He should read the budget. Maybe they would know then.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Give me a break. They've had two years and more to get this right, and since we discovered the hidden Pan Am budgets, the minister has been dodging responsibility for the games. In estimates committee, he pointed at the board of TO2015, then the deputy minister clarified that the minister's secretariat actually babysits TO2015. So the minister improvised and talked about the many Pan Am partners instead.

But at the end of the day, it is the Premier, you and the minister of the portfolio who are responsible, so why can't I get an answer about why there are so many Pan Am budgets not included in the pretend \$1.4 billion? Minister, how many budgets are there? How much will the Pan Am Games really cost the taxpayers of Ontario? What's the number? Tell me now.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, here he is again, asking questions, and he should have been asking those questions yesterday in committee. He chose not to. More importantly, he knows the answers, because we gave them to him two years ago.

The budgets are very clearly stated out. We have over \$50 million in under-budget capital expenditures to date. We recognize the challenges that we face, and we have put it to the 2015 committee. But more importantly, I quote the following from today's editorial, and this speaks

to the essence of why we have taken, and we do take, responsibility for bringing these games to the province of Ontario.

It's as follows: "When properly done, such events energize cities—and a lot is being handled well here. Pan Am site construction is in progress and, so far, running about \$50 million under budget. That's to be commended." It further states, "Instead of fanning fake 'scandals' and tarnishing Toronto's games, critics should take comfort in knowing that existing problems are"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward—Hastings will come to order.

New question.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question today is for the Minister of Labour. Recently, Minister, your Premier met with our leader, Tim Hudak, to seek support in passing nine hand-picked bills. One of the bills that your Premier presented was my bill, Bill 74, but yesterday your government acted like a coward, bowed to union pressure and announced you would no longer support this important bill.

Minister, why do you value your friendship with one union leader more than the thousands of good jobs, both unionized and non-unionized, that you have now put at jeopardy with your weak leadership and flip-flopping?

1040

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. As I referenced yesterday in the House during question period, late last Friday a decision was rendered by the Ontario Divisional Court as it related to the decision of the Ontario Labour Relations Board. The Divisional Court decision was on a judicial review application by EllisDon, and it's the subject of the same issue that is part of the member's Bill 74.

The Divisional Court, in its very thorough analysis, quashed the decision of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, which means that the company can operate under the status quo. The Ministry of Labour lawyers have advised us that this essentially achieves the same outcome as was intended by the private member's Bill 74.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: EllisDon is a London, Ontario, company that is widely regarded as a community leader, including being named 2013's number two best employer in Canada and a platinum member of Canada's 50 Best Managed Companies. Minister, EllisDon is also an employee-owned company, with employees that number in the thousands.

Yesterday, your Premier said that my bill is no longer needed and that you would not be supporting it. Will you and your government resume your support of my important bill that stands up for Ontario, or does Pat Dillon call the shots around here?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the Divisional Court has issued a very thorough decision. I'm sure the member op-

posite has read the decision. Essentially, what the decision does is, it maintains the status quo. It essentially does—and that's the advice that has been given to us by the lawyers at the Ministry of Labour—what is intended in Bill 74. So it's basically the status quo.

I also want to inform the member opposite and all parties that if a party wishes to appeal this decision, they must file an application with the Court of Appeal, seeking leave to appeal, by October 15 at 4 p.m.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the minister: It is unfair to expect an Ontario company to live by one set of rules while foreign competitors undercut them, putting at risk thousands of good jobs. My Bill 74 will settle this issue once and for all, but your colleague Pat Dillon has asked you to oppose it, and clearly, Minister, you have listened.

Minister, Pat Dillon has several government appointments, including as a member of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, as a member of the board of Infrastructure Ontario, as a member of the board for the College of Trades, and is also your key adviser on transit taxes. Coincidentally, Pat Dillon is also an ally of this government's influential Working Families Coalition, which spent \$10 million electing the Liberals.

Minister, do you think it's right to put an Ontario company and Ontario jobs at risk in favour of one union leader?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, our government has a plan for the economy that builds people up and invests in things—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to keep you guessing as to when I'm going to act.

Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Stable labour relations is very much part and parcel of building a productive, healthy economy that attracts investment and creates jobs in our economy.

Speaker, I don't think this side of the House here, the government, is going to take any lectures from the members opposite, who have done nothing but bring our economy in Ontario down by proposing policies that are going to cut jobs in our province, that are going to reduce wages for both unionized and non-unionized workers by promoting policies like right-to-work-for-less. They are going to create havoc in the province. Even John Tory, their former leader, has given them advice not to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the government House leader. The government House leader has

tabled a motion that will allow speedy passage of a bill designed by Liberal and Conservative lobbyists to help EllisDon, one of the Liberal Party's biggest donors. Yesterday, the Premier spun a very confusing tale about Liberal plans for the bill.

I have a pretty simple question: Is the government proceeding with their programming motion, or are they backing off plans to ram this bill through the House?

Hon. John Milloy: I don't know where to begin in correcting the facts. I'll begin with what was put forward. The fact of the matter is that no one is ramming through anything. We came forward with a motion to this House, which has eight bills as well as the formation of a Select Committee on Developmental Services. All the motion does is outline a reasonable schedule for debate, discussion and votes by this House on these bills. In some cases, they will be going to committee, and in other cases they will be coming here for third reading. That is the extent of it.

When I sat down with my fellow House leaders and showed them a draft of the bill, I certainly said that we would be willing to entertain any changes if people want a little more debate here or a different way of dealing with it in committee. The NDP did not want to have that discussion, so we came forward with this programming motion. Yes, we do intend to pass it and then go on to have serious consideration of these important bills as well as the formation—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday we heard a lot of spin from the Premier, but what we didn't get was a clear answer. We've put forward an amendment to the government motion that would take the EllisDon bill off of the fast track. Will the Liberal members support that amendment?

Hon. John Milloy: I think that the Premier was very clear yesterday. She was speaking to one bill on that list of eight. That bill is intended to remedy a ruling by the Ontario Labour Relations Board. Since the discussions amongst the parties, we have had a court ruling which quashed the Ontario Labour Relations Board ruling, and the speaker made the very obvious point that the bill was no longer necessary. That is our position, under the assumption that there won't be an appeal. I think that the Premier put forward a very straightforward situation. That is our position at the moment. Over here, we look forward to debate and discussion in front of the committee. There will be an opportunity for hearings. There will be an opportunity for amendments and an opportunity, should it proceed through committee, for a final vote here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals can play hot potato with this bill as much as they want, but it doesn't change the fact that their hands have been all over it. Yesterday, the Conservative sponsor of this bill told reporters that they weren't the ones who put the bill on

the fast track. He claims it was the Premier who made the "delivering for EllisDon act" a priority. Will the government House leader confirm that it was in fact the Liberals and not the Conservatives who asked to fast-track this bill?

Hon. John Milloy: The bill in question is a private member's bill that was drafted by the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex.

What I find unbelievable is that the NDP, last spring, were all in favour of programming motions when it came to the Financial Accountability Officer and the passage of the budget. We worked very closely on it, and when it came to the issue of closure, they stood and voted with the government in terms of closure.

What I find incredible is that when it's a programming motion that they support, they're all in favour of it. When it's a programming motion with a number of very important bills that all parties in this House support, all of a sudden they've changed their tune. Let's have consistency in this Legislature. All we are doing is putting forward a motion which will allow for further debate and discussion on a list of bills that are important to the people of Ontario and in which there is a lot of interest here in this Legislature.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. The people who make this province work every day have been looking for some help—help for their aging parents who are waiting for home care, help for their kids who are looking for jobs and help for their pocketbooks when it comes to their bills at the end of the month. But they're still waiting. Can the Acting Premier explain how the EllisDon bill which the Liberals are now scrambling to back away from became a priority?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The leader of the third party talks about something extremely important, and that's the work that we've done as a party for the last 10 years to help working families here in Ontario. I'm pleased to say that we've cut taxes for 93% of Ontario taxpayers. We've established a co-operative securities regulator, signed just recently with British Columbia. We've introduced a financial transparency and accountability act so that no other government can hide deficits as they did in the past.

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We reformed the Pension Benefits Act to modernize rules to assist employers and protect workers. We've reduced high business education tax rates. We introduced property and sales tax credits for seniors and low-to-moderate-income families. We've harmonized the sales tax, which none of them had the courage to do. We eliminated capital tax for business. We reformed the property tax system so that it's predictable for homeowners by phasing out property taxes, and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, we supported the auto sector and many others who have over—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, here's what people see when it comes to their needs, their health care, their jobs and the cost of their everyday lives: The government delivers a lot of conversation but not much result at all. But when it's time to move a power plant to win some seats, or deliver for a well-connected donor, the government can spring into action at a moment's notice. What does the Acting Premier think that says about the government's priorities?

Hon. Charles Sousa: As mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we've been working very hard for hard-working Ontarians, and we will continue to do so, regardless of what the others say they will do and never do. We have taken the initiatives to bring forward jobs strategies for working Ontarians that no others—that's why we've had over a 180% return of those jobs since the recession. That's why we'll continue to support and make transformations to health care, so that we're able to supply even more services to those who need it at more affordable rates.

In the end, it's about helping everybody. The member opposite is talking about one issue; we can deal with more than one issue at a time on this side of the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People are waiting for government to make their challenges a priority. Instead, they see insiders expensing parking fees while they collect six-figure salaries, hundreds of millions spent moving gas plants, and well-connected insiders getting results in the Legislature while everyday people are stuck waiting. When is this government going to start delivering results for the people who make this province work each and every day?

Hon. Charles Sousa: So let's talk about those results. Since February of this year alone, we've increased investment in home care and community care by 1% annually. We've invested \$260 million in home and community care, \$185 million in home care for approximately 46,000 more seniors. We've made reforms to physiotherapy that will double the number of clinics and provide 200,000 more supports for seniors. We've invested \$2.5 million for enhanced breast-feeding supports and many other things to help families and their infants get a good start in life.

But more importantly, since 2003 we've done a tremendous amount of work to help reduce wait times, to provide for more hospitals, more nurses, more doctors, more medical schools, more youth employment, more support to bring forward a positive economic growth in our province, a province that all of us are very proud of, and we'll continue to work alongside those hard-working Ontarians who make it a success for us all.

ELECTION ADVERTISING

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Acting Premier. Later today, we will be debating my bill, Bill 101, to put a cap on third party advertising, but we know why your government won't support my bill—because the

Working Families Coalition spent \$9 million keeping you in power. But what truly surprises me is this government's complete change in position. On April 8, 2013, when the Premier was asked about changing the rules around third party advertising, she said, "I'm very interested in looking at the recommendations and open to looking at changes that could be made." Moreover, the Attorney General John Gerretsen said this: "The notion of putting a spending limit on third parties certainly strikes me as something that's well worth looking into."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: And oh, by the way, the leader of the third party also advocates changing the restrictions.

Acting Premier, why—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. When I stand, you sit.

Acting Premier.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It appears to me that the member opposite just doesn't accept the results of various by-elections and the rejections that many have placed on the PCs and their activities. What's important, though, and as a result of past performances by that party, is that we on this side of the House have introduced transparency and more accountability. In 2005, we introduced real-time disclosure rules. This allows political parties and leadership contestants to file with the Chief Electoral Officer within 10 days. It also requires the Chief Electoral Officer to publish information about the—

Interjections

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Renfrew, come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: —contributions made on the Elections Ontario's website—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. When I mention the member from Renfrew's name, it should be the signal that says stop, not continue.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I never heard you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You never heard me? You know why?

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, of course, we introduced more legislation in 2007. We introduced third party advertising rules in Ontario for the first time. All of these are encouraging and ensuring that we have more transparency and more openness, and the opposite party voted against those items.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: To the Acting Premier: The influence that the special interest groups have over this government is obvious, and quite frankly, it's quite alarming. A few months ago, the Premier and senior members of this government made it clear that you were open to changing the rules surrounding third party advertising, and today you have completely flip-flopped. How could you possibly go from being open to some-

thing just a few months ago to being completely opposed to something today? It just doesn't make sense.

Is there a reason why you've changed your position? Or did the Working Family Coalition boss, Patrick Dillon, write another letter to you, telling you not to support this bill?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, I think the member opposite is not accusing this side of the House inasmuch as he's insulting the public.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I question why I have to get to this point where, every time the person stands up, I have to threaten people to be thrown out, and they just start yelling. It doesn't make sense to me, truly, and it's going to stop. If you push it, I'll throw you out.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite, in every respects, is underestimating and insulting the very intelligence of voters in the public.

Under current rules, third parties that spend \$500 or more on election advertising are required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer. We put that in place; they voted against that. Registered third parties must also report to the CEO on election advertising expenses. If election advertising expenses are \$5,000 or more, these reports must be audited. These rules ensure that there is transparency and free speech. These guys don't want to have free speech in this public democracy.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Good morning, Minister.

The independent report on the Herb Gray Parkway has made it clear that the girders installed by Freyssinet are not up to standard. To quote one portion of that report, "The only option is to replace deficient and non-compliant girders with new ones that are constructed in accordance with all the applicable requirements for design construction."

Minister, why are you not listening to the recommendation of the report and choosing, instead, to salvage instead of replacing these girders?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I again want to thank the member for his very sincere concern about this. I think it's a concern we both share.

Mr. Speaker, I want to be very clear about this, because I was somewhat disappointed when I read some of the reporting on this, and I think a fundamental fact is missing. The independent expert review looked at this in detail for two months. The committee is still working today, and testing is continuing.

I made two very clear commitments, which I intend to keep. The first one was that we would not open a single structure until the chief engineer of the province, who always makes these decisions, in whom trust in his competency is placed by the people of Ontario, signs off on them. The second thing I said is that this would not be a

political decision. Whatever the chief engineer decided, based on his expertise, based purely on engineering—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Minister, you mentioned the reporting. I don't know if you saw the editorial cartoon in the Windsor Star today that has the girder with band-aids slapped all over it, and that's an editorial comment unto itself.

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The report says that the test results around salvaging the girders did not address all the concerns related to durability of the girders made by Freyssinet. On July 22, in a press release, you said, "The girders in question will be removed unless the safety and durability can be assured and any compliance concerns are addressed." Minister, what made you change your mind?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the one thing I've gotten in Ontario is a much thicker skin. I don't think we should allow cartoonists to be making engineering decisions.

Second, who should make this decision? Should it be the Minister of Transportation? Should it be the member opposite? Should it be the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing? No. The decision must be made by the chief engineer.

The condition of some of those girders at this point is not adequate. If any of those girders are not up to the high standards of the highway code and the bridge code and cannot meet that threshold to be as safe as any other girders, they will not be installed, but they will be removed. That determination will not be made by politicians; it will be made by engineers, specifically the chief engineer of Ontario.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I rise on behalf of my constituents of the great riding of Etobicoke North with a question for the honourable Minister of Community and Social Services.

Speaker, the mark of a just society is how that society treats its most vulnerable. Investing in people, their opportunities and their future is important to the conduct of any government. I know first-hand from my community that constituents who have relied on social assistance in a time of need appreciate that support for their loved ones. Even those members of society who do not avail themselves of social assistance value the fact that such a system is in place, on call, as it were, for those who may need it.

I recall that a part of our government's Poverty Reduction Strategy was to initiate the first review of social assistance in more than 20 years. The Commission for the Review of Social Assistance in Ontario published recommendations to better the system for all Ontarians. With the guidance of the commission, the government envisions a more improved system that is more account-

able and delivers services and supports. I ask the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for his question. I know from conversations with all members of the House that we're all committed to working towards a fairer society. I'm pleased to report that our government will be investing some \$400 million-plus over the next three years to help make the prospects of some 912,000-plus people in Ontario just a little bit brighter.

Social assistance rates have been increased by 1% for families on Ontario Works and individuals with disabilities on the ODSP program. As well, single adults without children will receive a top-up of \$14 a month, for a total increase of \$20. These increases are kicking in this week.

Is there more for us to do? You betcha. But you know what? These changes are going to help.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I thank the minister not only for his answer today, but for his ongoing commitment and sincere efforts on these files. The much-needed targeted rate increase will be welcome news for those in my riding and across Ontario for people who depend on Ontario Works and ODSP.

However, learning from recipients in my riding, I know that such supports, though important, are nevertheless not all that there is to social assistance. Social assistance, they tell me, is about more than a cheque. Other benefits include employment supports and skills training; child care support, so people can work and earn a better life for their families; and job placement supports for people with disabilities to achieve greater financial independence.

I ask once again, Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he inform the House what other changes have been made to social assistance, and what the plans are going forward?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Again, the member is right, and I'm delighted to respond. New rules now allow social assistance individuals to keep up to \$200 of the money that they earn. This, of course, is going to allow them to gain a quicker foothold in the economy and affirm their efforts.

Ontario Works clients can also keep more assets so they won't have to give up everything they own before they're eligible for assistance.

As part of the Ontario government's economic plan to invest in people, invest in infrastructure and support a dynamic and innovative business climate, we're committed to helping more people find jobs.

In the past few months, my cabinet colleagues and I have been seeking input from people all across this province on what could be done through a renewed poverty reduction strategy. We have been listening, we have been learning, and we're committed to further action. I look forward to working with all members of the House to make things just a little bit better for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is to the Minister of Finance. At the Fort Erie Race Track, people are losing their jobs, all because of this government's deliberate destruction of the horse racing industry. The minister sat at the table when that callous decision was made. It was made without warning, without consultation and without even so much as an economic analysis.

Will the minister apologize today to the people of Fort Erie and the people of rural Ontario for not speaking up when he had the chance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, our government believes in a strong, sustainable future for the horse racing industry in Ontario. Our plan is guided by the work being done by the Horse Racing Transition Panel. The panel is made up of three very distinguished people: John Wilkinson, John Snobelen and Elmer Buchanan. Premier Wynne has asked the panel to develop a comprehensive five-year plan for the industry. Their plan will present a road map for sustainability for the industry, including grassroots and larger tracks.

I'm confident that when the panel reports on its recommendations for the five-year plan, the industry will have the confidence it needs, and every track that wishes to conduct live racing will have the opportunity to do so.

The horse racing industry is vital to rural communities across this great province. Our government will continue to work with Ontario's great horse racing community to ensure that racing remains vibrant in this province for years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, I did not hear an apology. Neither have we heard an apology from the leader of the NDP for her part in passing the budget that has already cost 9,000 jobs. Because of that deal with the NDP, the future of the 100-year-old Fort Erie Race Track is uncertain at best.

Fort Erie has suffered some devastating blows at the hands of this government. You've shut down their ER, and you've closed their tourism office, and now this.

If the minister won't apologize, let's put it this way: Why is it more important to hang on to a few dozen jobs for Liberal and NDP politicians than it is to hang on to so many thousands of jobs in the horse racing industry? Not even the priciest of panels can excuse him for that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Our government is committed to a vibrant and sustainable future for horse racing in the province of Ontario, and it is central to our plan going forward. As part of our future, our government commissioned a panel to develop a five-year plan for the

racing industry that's accountable, transparent, customer-focused and a net benefit for the taxpayers of Ontario.

Our friends across the floor can't have it both ways. They can't bluster one week that the Slots At Racetracks Program should be reinstated, then come here two weeks later and say it wasn't accountable. As we say in Peterborough, Mr. Speaker, that dog doesn't hunt.

I'll repeat again for the member across the way, because it seems he wasn't listening on any occasion—on three occasions. We've got a plan. We're going to bring a plan forward, and horse racing will be vibrant in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

WATER QUALITY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim.

Today it was reported that water bottled in Ontario and sold at restaurants in Ontario was found to contain bacteria at levels that constitute a threat to public health. The ministry found out about this risk three months ago.

My question is simple: Why did the Ministry of Health not warn the public when it first learned about this health risk?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yesterday, Dr. Arlene King issued a warning to consumers and businesses not to consume or serve bottled water manufactured by the Blue Glass Water Co. Ltd., also known as Caledon Clear Water Corp.

It is a federal issue, as the member opposite knows, but we take steps to protect our public. Samples of water taken from the company's products have been found to have some contamination with bacteria. As a result, we feel there is a potential health threat posed by these products. So, in accordance with Ontario's Health Protection and Promotion Act, Blue Glass Water Co. Ltd. was ordered to cease operations related to bottling, processing and distributing water.

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Inspections by public health units have identified the product in food establishments in Hamilton and Niagara, as well as the continued presence of some of the product in food establishments here in Toronto. The ministry is carefully investigating and monitoring the situation with public health units to ensure public safety.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Something is wrong when the Ontario Ministry of Health finds out that a product sold in Toronto, Niagara, Hamilton and elsewhere in Ontario is unsafe for consumption, yet it fails to warn the public. To protect the health of Ontarians is the Ministry of Health's primary mandate. Is it really ministry policy to wait until somebody gets sick or maybe even dies before letting the public know about contaminated water?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question and I know the member opposite shares the same concerns that

we all do in this House, and those are public safety, people's health and people's well-being, and to suggest otherwise or to infer that we are putting people's lives at risk is not, I believe, your intent, because I know that we all work together to do just that.

We rely on the advice of Dr. King. We have taken the steps necessary to work with our partners through the Ministry of Health, and we will continue to press and make those decisions as we find them out.

But, please, we're all in this together and we're fighting for the benefit of our public. No one has been hurt at this point. We intend that not to occur.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Steven Del Duca: My question today is for the very hard-working Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Applause.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely; well-deserved kudos to the minister.

The parents and families in my riding of Vaughan are concerned about youth unemployment, the rate of youth unemployment in our province and the future of their children. As young people struggle to find good opportunities for employment, it is important for our government to listen and it's important also that we take action.

I am delighted to hear that the province has taken up the challenge and implemented the Youth Employment Fund to help youth find good jobs and experience in our growing economy. Can the minister please update the House as to how young people across our province and in my community of Vaughan can benefit from the Youth Employment Fund?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question, obviously, but I want to thank him as well for his leadership in Vaughan, standing up for young people in that community, a fast-growing community; lots of youth in that area.

The member knows that our government has risen to the challenge of tackling youth unemployment in the creation of the Youth Employment Fund, and we'll continue to ensure that helping our young people is indeed a top priority.

I'm proud to report that after just one week, 535 youth have had active job placements—after just one week—with 126 more young people beginning placements that will happen in the very near future. Mr. Speaker, we're off to a very, very good start.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the hard-working people at Employment Ontario and our service providers for putting this program out there in a very short period of time, getting it up and running. They are out there for our young people. I encourage all members from all parties, when young people approach them in their constituency offices, to refer them to their local service provider to help them find work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I thank the minister for his outstanding work on this file. The people of my riding

and the people of our province are very lucky to have him on the job.

I am thrilled to hear that this particular fund has been a huge success across this province. The unemployment rate amongst our youth is an issue that certainly deserves our government's attention. I'm pleased to hear that this program is accessible to youth across the province, although my primary concern is with the youth in my riding of Vaughan and in other important communities in Ontario like Niagara Falls. Youth unemployment is very apparent in communities, and many of our young people face great barriers each and every day.

Speaker, through you to the minister, I'd like to know exactly how the youth of Vaughan and the youth of Niagara Falls can benefit from the Youth Employment Fund.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's an interesting question, Mr. Speaker. The Youth Employment Fund provides up to \$7,800 for each eligible youth for a flexible range of supports, including training and financial assistance, and to cover costs like transportation and tools. Youth and employers can apply for this fund by reaching out to their local Employment Ontario service providers.

I know for a fact, for instance, that youth in Vaughan can benefit from two Employment Ontario service providers: Seneca College of Applied Arts and Technology, which is located at 1490 Major Mackenzie Drive, and the Toronto District School Board, located at 4585 on Highway 7.

These service providers are out there in places like Niagara Falls, but are right across the province to ensure that our young people have access to this very important program. Putting young people to work is a priority for this government. We're going to ensure this program is delivered on time, on budget, and ensure that our young people get—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, on September 18, I asked you in question period what the government is doing to resolve an outstanding split pension issue that has been unresolved for years concerning public sector employees who have been affected by past public sector divestments. Your response two weeks ago did not answer my question and was some nonsense about pensions in general, retirement planning and what your government was doing, all stuff we already knew.

I'm not sure if then you couldn't answer my question or what the problem was, but thousands of public sector employees want and deserve an answer. Minister, again today, I'll ask you the same question: What is your government doing to help thousands of paramedics, thousands of MPAC employees and thousands of other public sector workers who are affected by the split pension

issue? And why is it taking your government so long to fix this injustice?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question and I appreciate the concern the member opposite has in regards to pension and reform and the benefits necessary to protect workers, as well as employers. That's why we've taken initial steps, and they're outlined in our budget as well, around enhancement to CPP, for example. We recognize that's a broad-based initiative to help our workers in Ontario. We also included PRRPs, pooled registered retirement plans, to help those who aren't saving.

But to the point that the member opposite requests, we recognize that regulations are coming soon in the fall. We will continue to do our utmost to try to resolve issues going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister: I really don't think you give a damn at all about these people. I mean—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, I don't understand. I've been at this issue for five years. Thousands of public sector employees are starting to retire. Their employer changed, through no fault of their own, because ambulance services moved to upper-tier government from hospital-based services. MPAC employees used to be property assessment people in your ministry, or the Ministry of Revenue, and they moved to MPAC, and yet their pensions didn't follow them, and they're adversely affected by this. Many of them will be out thousands and thousands of dollars that they paid for. This doesn't cost you money; this is their money.

Now I know the unions run the pensions. Are they running this government on this issue too because they don't want to take the time to transfer the money to the other pension plans run by other unions? I have learned over time, these unions don't get along. Are you in the unions' pockets again—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Before any other members get themselves into water that they don't want to be in, I'm going to just tell the member that I'm not happy with his last part and that I would hope we would race to the top and not to the bottom with the kinds of comments that I'm hearing. I'm going to offer the minister an opportunity to answer the question.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's unfortunate that the premise of the question now is about bashing labour and bashing the very people who are hard-working Ontarians in our province, who are in need of support with their pensions, and that's what we're doing.

Many public sector employees whose pensions are affected by past government-initiated restructuring want consolidation with their split pension entitlements in a single plan. We get that. We've made reforms to the Pension Benefits Act. We've taken regulatory provisions

that are necessary to be initiated before those reforms are implemented. We posted draft regulations in February 2013, consulted up until April 15, 2013. On July 12, 2013, we posted draft regulations on the regulatory registry regarding asset transfers, and we've made consultations that closed in September.

After comments are received and appropriate changes are made, both regulations will be presented to cabinet, and that will happen in the fall of this year.

1120

BEAR CONTROL

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Last weekend, a Peterborough woman was out walking her dogs when she was attacked by a black bear. Thankfully, due to the actions of her dogs, she survived. This is the latest in a series of human-nuisance bear encounters across the province. Will it take a tragedy before this government reconsiders its short-sighted decision to scrap the Bear Wise program?

Hon. David Orazietti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite with regard to this particular issue. I think we're all very relieved that the incident in question that we're speaking about, and that the member is speaking about, didn't result in something more serious. Obviously, our thoughts are with the individual.

As the member pointed out, there has been a number of nuisance bear issues this spring, in particular, and throughout the summer that have been particularly challenging in many northern communities. As a northerner, I take this issue very seriously. Public safety is paramount when it comes to the safety of individuals in northern Ontario and throughout the province of Ontario, for that matter. We are working with our ministry officials to develop a plan that will see a more effective response when it comes to nuisance bear issues in the province of Ontario, as this issue has been raised by members opposite as well as members in our caucus. There are members on this side of the House, as well, who are very passionate about the issue and that care—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: My supplementary is also to the Minister of Natural Resources. The people of Ontario, including northerners, need more than a plan. We need action. The government didn't seem to have a problem with ignoring the safety concerns of northerners or down-loading the responsibility of dealing with rogue bears onto the police and northern municipalities. But this latest attack happened just east of Toronto.

Bear attacks are getting harder and harder to ignore, as the minister has acknowledged. Will it take a bear on the south lawn of Queen's Park to force the ministry to do its job and manage wildlife?

Hon. David Orazietti: As the member knows, when the bear hunt was cancelled in 1999 by the party opposite in the Conservative government—our government took action by extending the fall hunt for bears, and in fact

helped to increase the harvest numbers of bears in the province of Ontario. We know the numbers are relatively stable, but we did help to increase the number of bears harvested across the province by increasing and expanding the fall hunt.

But I certainly take the member's point. This is not an issue that we have been neglecting. This is an issue that we take very seriously, and we are developing a plan. I look forward to the member's support on the plan that we bring forward that will help to more aptly address nuisance bear challenges.

I have to say, Speaker, that with the communities in northern Ontario, the member is well aware that there are not incidents occurring all—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question this morning for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Our government recognizes, and I think all members would agree, that our capacity as a province to compete in the global knowledge-based economy depends in large part on how well the province is able to harness its resource strength. Our track record is quite good. As a country, Canada ranks sixth in the world for the quality and the impact of its research; Ontario comprises nearly half of that expertise.

Supporting research and innovation is fundamental to a competitive economy. Ontario businesses invest \$6 billion in research and development every year. That's almost half of Canada's total. Through you, Speaker, to the Minister of Research and Innovation, what is the provincial government doing further to support and advance research and development in our province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Oakville for that question. Mr. Speaker, Ontario's research and development initiatives have always been in the forefront and a most important priority for this government. Research and innovation creates good-value jobs and also it's the engine of the economy for tomorrow.

Our government has committed \$557 million to recent projects through the Ontario Research Fund—Research Excellence program. This program and the recipients of this program have leveraged \$1.2 billion in funding from private and institutional sources. We have also committed \$760 million to Ontario Research Fund—Research Infrastructure program. This program has leveraged \$1.4 billion of investment from other sources. Through this program we are funding 1,600 research projects across the province for their infrastructure and equipment costs.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud that our government's investment in research and innovation has kept us at the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm glad to hear that our government is continuing to invest in the research and

development initiatives right here in the province. I think we'd all agree in this House that we know that's going to help create jobs and spur the economic growth that we all want. It's going to allow us, if we do this, to continue to build an economic climate that offers the right conditions the businesses are asking for to grow and create those jobs.

We provide the necessary resources and support for researchers. We know that that's critical to the economic prosperity of this province, in both the short term and the long run. We know we want to support world-class research and we need to commercialize those technologies from the research stage, but through you, Speaker, to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What other specific government programs are in place that will support enhanced research and development in this province?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again I want to thank the member from Oakville for that question. Our government recognizes the importance of supporting necessary means for researchers and businesses to move their ideas and innovations from the labs to commercialization.

One of the initiatives of our government is the Early Researcher Awards program to help newly appointed researchers at our research institutions build their team. The recipients of this initiative and this program have trained 13,000 highly qualified researchers for the province of Ontario.

Another initiative which we have been following is to assist the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research to create 1,600 high-quality jobs. Actually, yesterday I had the pleasure, with the member from Whitby—Oshawa, of visiting the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research. They are conducting world-class research. We are so proud of the work they do in order to cure cancer and to manage this very dreadful disease. We are glad to report that we are in the forefront—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Acting Premier: On July 12, under the authority of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, an illegal burger shack in Caledonia was ordered closed. Then, on July 22, a cease-and-desist order was issued by the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

This burger shack is on MTO property, and the court order names your Minister of Infrastructure, but you have not closed this burger shack.

Acting Premier, it's been two and a half months since the court order was issued. Why do you feel your government is above the law in disobeying this court injunction?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. As the member opposite knows, those issues regarding the burger shack are before the court today, as we speak—in front of the Superior Court on both issues. Until the court deals with that today and renders its decision, it would be

inappropriate for anyone in this House to comment on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Acting Premier, this is to you: a condemned burger shack next to an illegal smoke shack; it's on government land adjacent to provincial Highway 6. There's no potable water, no sink to wash your hands, no refrigeration and intermittent power. It's clearly a threat to public health.

Now, as we know, the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit is trying to get a contempt-of-court ruling against your Minister of Infrastructure. I think you would agree it's unusual for a medical officer of health to have to get a contempt-of-court ruling against a minister of the crown.

What will it take for your government to apply the rule of law? Acting Premier, will you ask your minister, who is now and could be in contempt of court, to step aside until this gets resolved?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Minister?

Hon. David Zimmer: The member opposite knows full well that when issues of this importance are before the court, it's inappropriate for anyone to comment on the case. Those issues—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: EllisDon is before the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I didn't get things quiet for you to have another heckle.

Finish, please.

1130

Hon. David Zimmer: As we speak, this very moment, those issues are being heard before the Superior Court of Ontario, by a judge of that court, and you are being disrespectful by trying to raise those questions in the middle of a court hearing over in Brantford today. The member opposite knows better than that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated please.

New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Acting Premier: City leaders from Hamilton to Kingston are raising serious questions about the safety of Enbridge's proposal to reverse its Line 9 pipeline and pump tar sands crude right across Ontario. The Ontario government also has concerns. This summer, the Ministry of Energy asked Enbridge some important questions—questions about the risks posed by a Line 9 reversal to wetlands, shorelines and the drinking water of millions of Ontarians.

Unbelievably, Enbridge refused to answer those questions. How can the government ensure that Line 9 will be safe when it can't even get answers from Enbridge?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: We all have an interest in the transportation of energy resources and economic benefits that follow. In Ontario, we have a number of expectations around these kinds of projects. We expect that the highest safety and environmental standards will be met. The duty to consult with First Nations and all peoples must be met. Communities must be consulted in an open, transparent and accessible fashion.

Pipelines that cross provincial boundaries are federal decisions under the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board. Ontario has actively intervened in these hearings to ensure that the best interests of Ontarians are protected, including our safety, environment, jobs and economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, when matters affect the environment that Ontarians depend on, Ontario has the power and responsibility to act.

Three years ago, an Enbridge pipeline spilled millions of litres of heavy crude into the Kalamazoo River in Michigan, causing over \$1 billion worth of damage.

The National Energy Board process concerning Line 9 doesn't examine all of the environmental aspects, and the Ontario government can't even get basic safety questions answered by Enbridge. Quebec has set up its own public consultations. Why won't the Liberal government stand up for Ontarians' drinking water and their watersheds, and call your own full environmental assessment on the pipeline reversal?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Pipelines that cross provincial boundaries are under the jurisdiction of the National Energy Board. The National Energy Board has a very rigorous process to ensure that safety and environmental standards are met. We expect the NEB to give careful consideration to all of the facts and presentations prior to making any decisions.

As we have in past hearings, Ontario has participated to stress the importance of aboriginal and public consultations. All governments have a duty to ensure that decisions made regarding large infrastructure projects, such as pipelines, include appropriate and meaningful public discussion. We continue to closely monitor the process and the health, safety and environmental impacts of this project. I would suggest that Mr. Mulcair in Ottawa may want to ask some questions on behalf of Ontario.

MINISTRY GRANTS

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the very dedicated Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We all agree that communities across this province need funding for capital projects that enable and support social and economic development, and this includes our aboriginal communities. Investing in aboriginal communities is a priority for our government, and creating an opportunity for everyone in Ontario is a benefit to all of us.

One program that is a good example of our government's efforts to invest in aboriginal communities is the Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program. This

program is bringing funding to communities across the province, and is leading to more opportunities and more jobs in aboriginal communities across the province.

Speaker, could the minister tell us about the capital grants program and the benefits it is providing to our aboriginal people here in Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: This is an important question. Our government's Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program helps First Nations and aboriginal organizations build or renovate community centres or small business centres. These centres support community development and new business opportunities, and can provide employment opportunities and tools that improve job skills and wellness for aboriginal people.

In 2013-14, my ministry will invest approximately \$3 million in infrastructure projects through this grant program. Since October 2003, the Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program has provided more than \$30.7 million to aboriginal communities through 112 major and minor capital grants programs and feasibility studies.

We continue to support community capital grant development for First Nations and aboriginal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. David Zimmer: These are just examples of the range of programs that are available through this capital grants program. It's a way in which the province is demonstrating that it wants to work with aboriginal communities to provide jobs.

VISITORS

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that members of this House could join me in welcoming Yeama Thompson, Sierra Leone country director for Journalists for Human Rights, Canada's largest media development organization, who is joined by Kathryn Sheppard here in the House today.

DEFERRED VOTES

TIME ALLOCATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on the motion for allocation of time on government order number 8.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.
The division bells rang from 1136 to 1141.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 2, Mr. Milloy moved government notice of motion number 23.

All those in favour, rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Balkissoon, Bas
Barrett, Toby
Bartolucci, Rick

Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hudak, Tim
Hunter, Mitzie
Jackson, Rod

Milloy, John
Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Nicholls, Rick

Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Duguid, Brad
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Gravelle, Michael

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Kwinter, Monte
Leal, Jeff
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
Mangat, Amrit
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted
McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.

O'Toole, John
Oraziatti, David
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Piruzza, Teresa
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

the roughly 1,200 tickets sold each year for the Lions yearly fundraiser. He continued to sell tickets late in his life, even after a stroke a number of years ago made him unable to speak.

He was the first Monkton Lion to receive the Melvin Jones award, the organization's highest honour, in recognition for his humanitarian work.

To his children and grandchildren, he will be missed. To his community and all the people whose lives he improved, he will be missed.

WINDSOR RESIDENCE FOR YOUNG MEN

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Last night at the Caboto Club in Windsor, more than 500 people came out for a tasty pasta dinner in order to help raise money for the Windsor Residence for Young Men. They also celebrated the first anniversary of this wonderful community asset in the Windsor-Essex county area.

Until a year ago, Windsor was the only major city in Canada without a facility dedicated to homeless young men who wished to get their lives back on track, be it through school or employment. We were fortunate to have three such facilities for women in our area but, until then, our young men were left out in the cold.

It took 11 years and the tireless dedication of my friend Greg Goulin, a well-known criminal defence lawyer in Windsor, to achieve this goal. We have about 100 homeless young men trying to stay in school while couch surfing. Greg saw the need, he met the challenge and made it happen. Twelve young men woke up this morning in a safe, warm environment.

During the first nine months, the residence took in more than 50 homeless young men between the ages of 16 and 20: 25 were attending school; four had employment of some sort; nine more found jobs while in residence; 19 have gone on to independent living; and 12 have returned to family but not necessarily their previous home.

The Windsor Residence for Young Men works because of the many volunteers who spend time there assisting staff. The Windsor Residence for Young Men is meeting a need that could use more support from the various orders of government. I urge the province to find out more about this great organization.

I applaud Greg Goulin for his leadership and the dedication of his many volunteers who have made the Windsor Residence for Young Men a true success story in our community.

KOREAN NATIONAL FOUNDATION DAY

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about Korean National Foundation Day. October 3 is recognized nationally as Korean National Foundation Day. It celebrates the founding of Korea. It is also the 51st anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed will rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
Campbell, Sarah
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France

Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras
Prue, Michael

Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Singh, Jagmeet
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 74; the nays are 20.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: A point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to welcome St. Mary's Catholic Elementary School from the fine village of Grafton, from my great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West, here at Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

LEONARD PARTRIDGE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Throughout Perth—Wellington, there are people whose dedication to their community shines through in all that they do. Leonard Partridge was one such person. Leonard died on September 4 at the age of 91.

Year after year, he worked hard to the benefit of his family, his neighbours and those who needed a hand. He wore many hats: farmer, electrician, fisherman, Lions Club president, Sunday school teacher, husband and father, to name just a few.

I knew him through the Lions Club. In addition to his service as president, he was a member for some 38 years. Leonard was legendary as a champion ticket seller for the Lions. He would routinely sell an incredible one third of

Almost half of all Koreans in Canada call Ontario home, and I'd like to thank all the Koreans for all the hard work they do in our communities and our province. The many ways in which this community contributes to the greater fabric of our province both in an economic and cultural sense should be applauded.

Ontario has sent trade missions to South Korea and hosted many delegates from the great country, forming bonds of business and friendships that produce real benefits.

In 2012, Ontario's goods exports to South Korea of \$446 million were concentrated in metals, synthetic rubbers, machinery and parts. Ontario imported over \$4.3 billion from Korea in 2012, a significant part of which was in the motor vehicle sector. This highlights the mutually beneficial relationship we share with these valued trade partners, particularly in the automotive manufacturing sector.

To our Korean friends, we want to say thank you and wish you the best day today as you celebrate Korean National Foundation Day.

NORFOLK COUNTY FAIR

Mr. Toby Barrett: The 173rd edition of the Norfolk County Fair starts October 8. Speaker, I know your family has attended in the past. It carries through to October 14. It's the largest rural fair in Ontario: 107,000 people came out last year.

Following on a sold-out show of 36,000 people for Mumford & Sons at the fairgrounds, this year is offering some fantastic music: Canadian music sensation Carly Rae Jepsen and country music stars Big & Rich. More in my generation, there's a lineup performing under Sail Rock, including stars like Christopher Cross; Gary Wright, the Dream Weaver; and John Ford Coley. The grandstand also features a demolition derby, a monster truck show, tractor pulls, and there's a daily Wild West show.

The grandstand creates the buzz; however, the fair doesn't forget its roots. It's the Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show: goat and cattle shows; sheep—I know I present a trophy at the sheep show; horse hitching; cow milking and sheep shearing. You will also see at the fair a collection of pumpkins that are well over 1,000 pounds, and I'm going to try to load one of them on my 1953 Chev truck.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good luck.

EVENTS IN ALGOMA-MANITOULIN

Mr. Michael Mantha: Not only is Algoma-Manitoulin a beautiful place to live and explore but we are home to some of the province's most accomplished artists.

Last week, we hosted the Sylvan Circle tour. Over 47 artists and artisans participated. The complete tour spans 100 kilometres, from Bruce Mines to Echo Bay, and is held in various community centres, studios, backyards, barns—and the list goes on. The event drew visitors from

across the province who discovered what it means for artists to live and work in their communities.

Also, this past weekend, Elliot Lake hosted their annual Arts on the Trail event, which was extremely well attended. Over 21 artists displayed their work, including paintings, stained glass, wood carvings and photography. I was impressed with the talent I saw.

However, one artisan particularly caught my eye. Conrad Bobiwash is an educator and designer and was influenced by Tom Thomson and the Group of Seven. He was one of the few aboriginal artists that formally exhibited with A.J. Casson in the 1970s. It was while in conversation with this elder of Canadian art that he realized that one must be true to his heart and creativity. One of his pieces is now hanging in my office, and I welcome you to all come and see it, along with many other pieces of art from Algoma-Manitoulin.

If you are looking for something to do this weekend, I invite you all to the Taste of Manitoulin. This is a fun-filled, colourful festival highlighting, sharing and celebrating Manitoulin's cultural diversity, including unique island culinary delights.

Not only do these events highlight the island, but you are all welcome to enjoy them.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak on the funding announcement that the Ontario Trillium Foundation made on behalf of the government on September 30, 2013, in Scarborough Southwest at the AccessPoint on Danforth on the occasion of the launch of Community Health and Wellbeing Week.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to represent the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care at this event, and I am pleased to say that the funding of \$199,200 to the Association of Ontario Health Centres will increase the capacity of Ontario's health centres and aboriginal health access centres to develop a community health and well-being strategy incorporating measures used by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing.

The AOHC works to promote public policy that supports health and well-being and that emphasizes health promotion and illness prevention through a strong focus on the social determinants of health. The AOHC also helps to eliminate systemic barriers to health and to champion health equity.

We know that a sustainable health care system means that we must focus on improving wellness and enhancing support in the community. That's why we're taking action to ensure that our youngest Ontarians get the best start in life and that our oldest Ontarians have access to critical fall-prevention classes and physiotherapy services.

1310

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. John O'Toole: Durham region is the legendary home of the horse racing industry in Ontario, both thoroughbred as well as standardbred horses.

The Ontario horse racing industry reported last week that 9,000 jobs have been lost since the Wynne government cancelled the successful Slots at Racetracks partnership. The association points out that job losses in the industry are double the worldwide job loss forecasts for BlackBerry, all because of a poorly considered decision to cancel the program.

When BlackBerry layoffs were announced, the Wynne government quickly responded by extending the contract of a specialized job action centre and promised to stand with BlackBerry and its workers. Indeed, it is important to help laid-off workers get back on their feet as soon as possible. However, not the same courtesy is being given to these hard-working, dedicated people.

It is important, as I said, and I urge this government to make some effort, to help rural Ontario workers who don't have jobs to go to today because of the unilateral decision to cancel the partnership program. At least 3,000 horse owners have left the industry, and that's a loss of investment of over \$1 billion.

On behalf of the entire horse racing sector in Ontario, I urge this government not to ignore the dedicated hard workers who have lost their livelihood because of this thoughtless and careless decision to cancel the horse racing program. Furthermore, please make a decision before—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Members' statements.

SENIORS' FUN FAIR

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to share with this House that recently I had the opportunity to attend the 12th annual Seniors' Fun Fair. The fair is held every year in my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South.

The name of the fair, Seniors' Fun Fair, is a bit of a misnomer. In fact, the fair is attended by not only the seniors; it is a family fun fair. It is attended by almost 5,000 seniors, young men, ladies, boys and girls from the cities of Mississauga and Brampton, who take part in different sports, such as shot put, tug of war, musical chairs, spoon race, three-legged race, sack race, kabaddi etc. Local businesses support the fair.

What an exciting event, especially when our seniors take upon themselves the task of advancing the mental and physical health of our communities.

The Indian International Seniors Club deserves kudos for organizing such a community event, which is growing every year.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I rise today in the House to speak on an issue that is affecting Ontarians across this province. Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, or COPD, is one of the leading causes of death in our province. Usually caused by smoking, COPD includes chronic

bronchitis and emphysema, and frequently affects people in the most productive years of their lives.

In Ontario, over 853,000 people live with COPD, and the number of individuals with COPD is only increasing. COPD is expected to become the third leading cause of death in Canada by 2020. One in four people in our province is likely to be diagnosed and receive medical attention for COPD in their lifetime.

Recently, at the Southlake Regional Health Centre, which services many of the people in my riding, they had to cut their respiratory rehabilitation program, which was available to COPD patients. My constituents are dependent on these services and looking to the development of alternatives to provide care.

What is equally concerning is that while other diseases like diabetes have funding available from the establishment of single-disease strategies, there is no such strategy in place for COPD. It is clear that the establishment of a strategy will help reduce the burden and suffering which COPD patients experience every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand—Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs concerning health and safety relating to an illegal smoke shack in Caledonia. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to be able to speak on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1, 2013; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior, for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

"Whereas instead of the 100-150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide 5-10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

"Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

"Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

"Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain, and fall risks;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments if medically necessary with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy service providers."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it and send it with Katherine.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a very important petition here which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and will give it to page Ravicha to deliver to the table.

FISHING REGULATIONS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary is printed each year by the Ministry of Natural Resources and distributed to recreational fishermen throughout the province to inform them of all the relevant seasons, limits, licence requirements and other regulations; and

"Whereas this valuable document is readily available for anglers to keep in their residence, cottage, truck, boat,

trailer or on their person to be fully informed of the current fishing regulations; and

"Whereas the MNR has recently and abruptly drastically reduced the distribution of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary such that even major licence issuers and large fishing retailers are limited to one case of regulations per outlet; and

"Whereas anglers do not always have access to the Internet to view online regulations while travelling or in remote areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately return the production of the Ontario Fishing Regulations Summary to previous years' quantities such that all anglers have access to a copy and to distribute them accordingly."

I affix my signature in support.

1320

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians with equal access to these services."

I support this petition and present it to page Sean, who will bring it down to the Clerks.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople;

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

As I am in agreement, I have attached my signature and given it to page Efuia.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this, will affix my signature, and give it to page William to deliver to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to present a petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows—this may be outdated, too:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care unilaterally introduced cuts to the ophthalmology funding for physician services and diagnostic testing, retroactive to April 1, 2012; and

"Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%; and

"Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients" in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts" to other health care programs in Ontario.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Peyton, one of the finest pages here.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: Here we are in hunting season; this is a very important petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas these vehicles are as safe as any motorcycle carrying a passenger since all of the manufacturers of the '2-up machines' have redesigned their original models by extending the wheel bases, beefing up their suspension to allow the carriage of passengers on the machine safely and providing a rear seat, many with handholds;

"Whereas the privilege to ride on secondary highways and trails with two people on a recreational vehicle is denied to off-road vehicles (ORV) operators but is granted to snowmobiles;

"Whereas the definition of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) in regulation 316/03 no longer reflects the majority of ATVs being marketed and sold in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Amend the definition of an ATV to include those that are: (a) designed to carry a passenger; (b) with more than four tires and designed to carry passengers; (c) without a straddle seat; and (d) carries passengers and has a steering wheel."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Pratah to bring it down to the Clerks.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: "Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

"Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program's pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

"Whereas the Auditor General's No. 1 recommendation is for the government to 'formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I affix my signature in support.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is recognized as one of the leading primary care providers in northwestern Ontario, providing essential services to those living in not only Ignace, but across northwestern Ontario; and

“Whereas a 2010 rent increase by the government of Ontario has threatened the long-term viability of the health centre’s operations; and

“Whereas the rent being charged to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is much higher than rent being charged to similar operations in other communities and far surpasses ‘market rent’ for a small community in northwestern Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To immediately rectify the situation and ensure the long-term viability of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre by either reducing rent, transferring ownership of the building to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre, or through capital funds to build a new facility that better suits the community’s needs.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature and give it to page Ravicha to deliver.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

“Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

“Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100 treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism

to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary.”

I affix my signature in support.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Of course, this summer I collected another couple of hundred signatures on this particular issue.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 people in Ontario waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care—e.g. to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

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“Whereas the personal support worker program has no provincial governing body that would provide provincial standards and regulation to assure the best care for residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and insufficient;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will provide registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers in the province.”

I certainly agree with this petition and present it to Peyton to bring it down to the Clerks.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’
PUBLIC BUSINESSARCHIVES AND RECORDKEEPING
AMENDMENT ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES ARCHIVES PUBLIQUES
ET LA CONSERVATION DES DOCUMENTS

Mr. Tabuns moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 102, An Act to amend the Archives and Recordkeeping Act, 2006 to impose penalties for

offences relating to public records of archival value / *Projet de loi 102, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur les Archives publiques et la conservation des documents pour imposer des peines en cas d'infraction relative aux documents publics ayant un intérêt archivistique.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, today, I put forward a bill to impose penalties for destruction of public records. To be honest, I never thought I'd have to put forward such a bill. I thought that such matters would have been taken care of.

But a few months ago, I was surprised to find that not only were public records being destroyed, but indeed there was no penalty for destroying them. My Liberal colleagues on the justice committee, in the course of the gas plant scandal, have made strong arguments that, really, almost every record should be destroyed unless it is specifically identified as one that should be kept. I've taken a leaf from the NDP government of Manitoba to propose that public records should be protected and that there should be a penalty of up to \$50,000 for intentional destruction of records that should be turned over to the Archives of Ontario.

The bill is not long; it's one page—not an awful lot of detail. My guess is that everyone in this room can read it at a very good clip. I'm going to get back to that detail later in the speech.

What I want to talk about is how we got here today. In 2006, the Liberal government passed Bill 152, which, amongst other things, updated the Archives Act, and then that government promptly forgot about the existence of the bill. Legions of ministers came and went. Legions of political staff went in and out of those ministers' offices. The law that was proclaimed so loudly back in 2006 was forgotten about, mouldered away in a digital vault, forgotten.

So, Speaker, once you go back to that act, why was it brought forward? There were three purposes given for the act:

“(a) to ensure that the public records of Ontario are managed, kept and preserved in a usable form for the benefit of present and future generations;

“(b) to foster government accountability and transparency by promoting and facilitating good record keeping by public bodies; and

“(c) to encourage the public use of Ontario's archival records.”

The central purpose is the one that is most important to us here today: to foster government accountability and transparency by promoting and facilitating good record keeping by public bodies. If there are no records, and given that human memory can be fallible—and frankly, on this committee I've found a great deal of fallibility and weakness in human memory—then you can spread a blanket of darkness over the activities of a government. None needed that blanket more than this government

because of the activities it engaged in that didn't serve the public well and in fact undermined the public interest.

So I move on to the story of the gas plant scandal and how that has illustrated the total need for penalties, to ensure that records aren't destroyed.

In 2005, the government of Ontario directed the newly formed Ontario Power Authority to sign a contract with Eastern Power Developers for a plant in Mississauga. In 2008 the Liberal government directed the OPA to secure a power plant in Oakville. In both cases, the Liberals ignored prominent and substantive warnings, both in this chamber and in the general public, that they were making substantial mistakes.

In fact, in the Oakville case, within six months of signing that contract, the Liberal government was looking for all kinds of ways to cancel it. Within six months of putting yourself on the hook for potentially up to \$1 billion in costs, they were looking desperately for ways to get out.

Within a year of contracting that Oakville plant, they cancelled that contract, opening the people of Ontario up to all kinds of liabilities. A contract was broken; an election was coming. To tell you the truth, Speaker, when you have that situation, you have a whole bunch of people who don't particularly want to have the door opened, a light shone in, and public understanding.

In 2011, even closer to the election, Eastern Power Developers got financing and a building permit and went ahead to build a power plant in Mississauga. From the records that were left, that weren't deleted, it was clear this generated quite a fair amount of frenzy in Liberal ranks. One of the options that was being looked at was allowing the plant to be built and, frankly, to just ensure it was never called on to produce power. But I assume that would have looked a bit too tawdry, so they abandoned that one.

We all know where this story leads. The Liberals saved enough seats to become a minority government but didn't get enough seats to block an inquiry. That is where this story leads.

In 2012, there was a fight in this Legislature, a tough fight of filibuster and delay, to ensure that records didn't get released—a very tough fight. Now that we've had a chance to look at what was there, I understand why they fought so hard.

The Liberals in 2012 were directed by this Legislature to produce correspondence and records, electronic or otherwise, from the Minister of Energy's office, from the Ministry of Energy and from the Ontario Power Authority. As you may well remember, when those documents first came out, there were many, many holes, but most interesting of all is that there was not a single document from the Minister of Energy's office—not one. Zero. None.

Within a few weeks of that first release of documents, it was very clear that there were these huge holes. In fact, the government's position became indefensible. They went back. They disgorged tens of thousands more documents, but still not a single document from the office of the Minister of Energy or his staff—none.

A committee was to start examining this matter in October 2012, and within days of that committee going to start, this House was prorogued. Frankly, from having read numerous emails and numerous communications, it's clear that the gas plant scandal was central to that decision to prorogue.

When the House came back, we started to question staff about what had happened and the records that they were supposed to provide. One of the most interesting was Mr. Craig MacLennan, the former chief of staff to energy ministers Duguid and Bentley. He came before us to testify. I have to say, in a man so young, it was tragic to see such early loss of memory. You would think he was a much older man, to have had such difficulty in recalling everyday events.

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I have to say, most startling to me, Speaker, was his response to my question about his emails, because I did ask him, "Mr. MacLennan, you provided nothing," and his response was, "By the sheer volume of documents that I get, I tend not to save emails, based on the capacity of my email account, but I know that the ministry legal counsel and the OPA does save them. I myself don't, and regularly delete emails." I was a bit surprised, Speaker.

"So you archive nothing? Everything is gone?" I asked him, and he said, "Correct. I don't know how to archive anything. I don't know what that means."

Well, you've got to give the guy a gold star for honesty. You've got to notice that here's someone who stood up and said, "I cleared the decks. It's all gone."

What was a puzzle to me was how he could be the chief of staff in such a critical position with such a bad memory and no written records at the same time.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Not at the same time.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, would you come to order, please?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I seem to have stirred some interest on the Liberal benches; there's a fair amount of noise coming from over there. Often, Thursday afternoon is a very sleepy time, and I appreciate the fact that my legislation has created so much interest.

When I went to read the Archives and Recordkeeping Act, because I knew there were laws governing this, it was pretty clear that Mr. MacLennan and his colleagues were supposed to be saving those records. The letter of the law is pretty clear: "For the purposes of this act, a record is a record of archival value if ... it relates to ... the development or implementation of a law or of a policy or decision of a public body, a legislative body or any other person or entity...."

But there is no penalty in this statute—none. So I filed a complaint with the Information and Privacy Commissioner because she is our safeguard for freedom of information. She has an interest in these matters. She assessed the situation, and I'll quote her comments from

the Toronto Star: "It's clear they didn't want anything left behind in terms of a record on these issues," Information and Privacy Commissioner Ann Cavoukian said Wednesday." In fact, the Star reported, "Top Liberal staffers—even in former Premier Dalton McGuinty's office—illegally deleted emails tied to the \$585-million gas plant scandal...."

"[D]espite breaking the Archives and Recordkeeping Act and 'undermining' freedom-of-information legislation, the scofflaws will not face penalties because there are none, said Cavoukian.

"That's the problem," she said, noting the inadequate legislation was passed by the McGuinty Liberals. "It's untenable. It has to have teeth so people just don't engage in indiscriminate practices."

Speaker, you know, from time to time, I'll hear a Liberal say, "Well, people weren't trained; the act was confusing." The act is pretty straightforward. You need to leave a clear record, other than transitory things that have nothing to do with the matter at hand. It's clear that training programs will come and go. What we need to do in this Legislature is put in place a penalty that will catch the attention of ministers and political staff for decades to come, reminding them that you can get in trouble for destroying public property, and our records, our collective memory, are our property.

Speaker, I urge everyone in this House to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 102, a motion that has just been brought forward by the member for Toronto—Danforth.

I think in there, there is some good intent, and there's a little bit of politicking going on as well. I think there's a good intent here in the bill, as technology has changed. Certainly, the amount of records that are kept in an organization the size of the provincial government is something that would probably outdo most organizations. Because it's a public body, I think it needs to be accountable. I think it needs to archive the work that it has done. And I think that, for the most part, it needs to be as transparent as it can possibly be.

I believe that's the more noble intent behind the bill that's being introduced to us today, Bill 102. It's to ensure that the government in the future, whether it's led by any one of the parties, has very clear rules and understanding as to how it should manage its records. I don't think anybody could argue with that. I think that's something we'd like to see in any organization today.

The pace of change in technology is something that is challenging a number of us. If I go back, I remember I was taught how to write with a fountain pen. Now we're operating with BlackBerrys. Simply, that would be 48 years ago, or 58 years ago, when you see the change from the fountain pen to the ballpoint pen to the Selectric typewriter to computers, and now on to BlackBerrys and tablets and everything else.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I still have one.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Mr. Bradley still has a fountain pen, he claims.

But it just seems to me that the rules, on an ongoing basis, have to keep up with the changes that are happening in that technology, because people have a right to be able to go to their government and to get a clear understanding as to what's happening currently and what has happened in the past, and they need to be confident that what's going to happen in the future will be kept track of in a way that other generations, future generations or even themselves at a future time will be able to go back and retrieve that information.

I think it came to light as a result of some of the investigations that have taken place around what happened, something that all three parties agreed should happen: the cancellation of two of the 19 power plants that were built in the province of Ontario and the relocation of those power plants to safe locations.

I think that—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The government did what the two opposition parties wanted done.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Exactly. Mr. Bradley says we did exactly what the people of Ontario wanted, and we did what all three political parties wanted to be done. As the MPP for one of the affected ridings, I certainly wanted the power plant moved. I know the people in my riding are very thankful it got moved. I know that Mr. Chudleigh did, because he was sending letters to the Premier asking for that as well.

That brings us back, however, to the content of the bill. The understanding of the bill is that we would set out clear rules, set out clear penalties, set out clear expectations to the members who are both employed by the civil service and by the government directly as to how they should conduct themselves when they're involved in any sort of undertaking on behalf of the government that involves the keeping of records or the sending of correspondence. I think that is eminently fair. I think that is something that should be supported by all members of this House.

Certainly, our House leader's office has taken it very, very seriously, is talking with the information and privacy officer on an ongoing basis as to how they can make things better, as to how our staff can be instructed. I would hope that other staffs of the other parties are availing themselves of that opportunity as well, because if we can make improvements in this area, it simply is going to serve the people of Ontario in a much better way.

So I thank the member for bringing forward—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Are you supporting the bill?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: The member for Trinity-Spadina has asked me if I'll support the bill. I believe that was the first thing I said, and I'm sorry if you missed that. So I am supporting the bill, but maybe not for all the reasons that were espoused by the member from Toronto-Danforth.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I want the emails from Highway 407.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: There are a lot of emails we'd all like to see that took place in the past.

But certainly, on a go-forward basis, I think what this has proven is, we're able to improve things. We're able to do things in a much better way. We're able to make sure that people who are employed in these roles understand what the rules are.

Deleting emails—I mean, I delete emails at home on an ongoing basis. If I didn't, my inbox would be completely unmanageable. So I think it's a routine thing. I get junk mail. I get mail—

Hon. James J. Bradley: The Conservatives burnt out the shredders when they left office last—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Yes. I guess when there was a change of government in the past, it was quite common to see all the shredding machines and the garbage trucks move in, and every office was cleaned out in a physical way. Now, perhaps, that's done electronically. I don't know. It's not something that I engage in myself.

But I want to get back to the intent of the member. What I think the member was trying to say was that we need clear rules moving forward, that we need to establish those rules, we need to establish a set of consequences and we need to move forward on that. That is something, as I said right from the start, that I think I can support. Certainly, I think that's going to meet with favour with most members of this House. It's a reasonable expectation and one that I think should go forward to committee.

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I'm not sure if I agree with the penalty. The penalty looks like it's a little severe when you look at the fines for some other offences. For example, possession of a restricted weapon with ammunition gets you a \$5,000 fine. However, the member is suggesting that this should carry a \$50,000 fine. Assault causing bodily harm or with a weapon carries a \$5,000 fine. Making mescaline, LSD or psilocybin gives you a \$5,000 fine. For some reason, this has been earmarked at \$50,000. I think that's something the committee might want to look at. Possession of drugs for the purpose of trafficking—that seems to be a pretty topical issue around the city of Toronto these days: That's a \$5,000 fine as well.

So certainly the fine needs to be reviewed, but the intent of the act, I think, is a good one and it should be supported by all members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm very pleased to rise in support of my friend from Toronto-Danforth, who I know has been a staunch advocate for accountability and transparency, particularly with the gas plant file. I served with him for many months on the gas plant committee. He has brought forth a bill, I think, that is worthy of consideration by all members of this Legislature.

Before I begin my remarks, I do think that we have to pause and reflect upon what the member from Oakville just said. He just said that when there is a change of government, the shredding machines come.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Your shredding machines.

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, you just said that the shredding machines come when there's a change of government, so therefore this all makes sense, Mr. Speaker. The deletion of emails and the shredding of documents is just par for the course from when Dalton McGuinty left office to when Kathleen Wynne came to office. We all now have answers to the questions that we've been asking. They are now admitting out loud that this is an ongoing practice of their government.

The funny thing is that when we looked, over the last number of months, at trying to obtain documents, we realized that the government couldn't find the print button on their computer. We waited months and months and months to actually get the documents; they just couldn't find that print button. But when it came to actually finding the delete button, well, that one was easy: They found that delete button. Thousands of documents are gone and others just simply weren't able to be printed.

They instituted an archiving and recordkeeping act that essentially means that they have to keep evidence that may be important for investigations much like the one we are undertaking here in this Legislature with respect to the contempt motion brought forward last year and earlier this year. So this is a very serious matter, and the OPP have now been called in to investigate whether there is criminal activity with respect to the deletion of evidence for a legislative committee to undertake. These are very serious times that we haven't actually seen in the province of Ontario. It's okay to not know where that print button is, but when it comes to deleting emails, that's par for the course. Liberal witness after Liberal witness after Liberal witness proudly boasted that it was simply okay to delete emails. "Why wouldn't we delete emails?"

I think it's very important to understand, in the scope of this, that people outside of this Legislature who elect us want the kind of accountability and transparency that seems to be failing this government. They don't have it. So what we have here is a bill that's actually going to establish some penalties for failing to live up to the act that they actually introduced. It's about time that we had these penalties legislated, and that's why I support this bill.

We have lots of witnesses that have come before us, and there has been a seemingly selective amnesia. They always say—this is the pattern in committee—"We don't know what you're talking about unless you can prove otherwise." It's selective amnesia. That's why we need these documents. Honesty right off the top would mean that they would answer those questions, but we always have to go toward extraordinary measures in order to get a little bit of accountability and transparency from this government.

That's why I think this Legislature must endorse this bill absolutely and strongly, because it's exactly what we need today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: In Ontario today, we have a lot of very serious issues in this province that aren't being addressed. To be fair, the issues of importance that aren't being addressed aren't being addressed for a number of reasons. But I think one of the most galling reasons and the reason certainly that people in Kenora-Rainy River have a hard time dealing with or accepting is that we aren't getting action on a lot of things, whether it's our cost of living, health care, transportation in the northwest, or jobs, all because of government mismanagement.

In the northwest, it's not uncommon for us to be told that there just isn't the money for the kinds of things that we need, especially when it comes to vital infrastructure projects, and that in order for us to have movement on these important issues, we have to submit a business case. It's a really tough pill to swallow when people in the northwest see that we're being denied opportunities and investment that we need when we see money that hasn't been costed out being funnelled, all in the best interests of the Liberal party.

Recently, it's no surprise that we've seen the government acting in its own self-interest by cancelling gas plants in southern Ontario without even knowing the true cost. And we've seen those costs escalate. They've ballooned from what we thought might have been tens of millions of dollars to hundreds of millions of dollars to potentially over \$1 billion. What that has done is, that has eroded the public trust. It further eroded the public trust when Liberal staff and other staff members destroyed records regarding the gas plants.

I think the solution is, there are really only two ways to keep a government in check: There are strict rules and consequences, and also getting people involved in participatory democracy; that is, essentially, restoring the public's faith in our electoral system so that people engage in the system. So simply put, what we need to do is we need people to believe in our system and to get involved again, because the perception is that politicians are only in it for themselves and that they're on the take. What we need to do is, we need to show very clearly that this is not the case. By putting these stricter rules in place and these consequences for violating these rules, we're going to restore that faith that people have in our political system, and it's going to benefit us all. I think that is exactly what this bill is going to do.

This would be a step in the right direction because it's going to stop people of any political stripe from destroying information. It's going to close loopholes identified by Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner. It's also going to increase accountability by creating real penalties for people who are destroying records that should be kept. This act, as was mentioned earlier, will impose a \$50,000 penalty for destroying public records and will really put some teeth in the legislation that already exists in the Archives and Recordkeeping Act. Again, I think that it's going to help us not just in the sense that it's going to create some actual consequences, but it's so, so important that we restore the public's faith in our electoral system. For that reason, I am pleased to

support this bill. I commend my colleague for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to bring to members' attention that we have a former member of the Legislative Assembly in the members' gallery this afternoon. I'd like to welcome Mr. Bart Maves, the member for Niagara Falls in the 36th and 37th Parliaments. Welcome.

Further debate?

Hon. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to speak in support of this bill, but I do want to add a couple of cautions about what I see as an unintended consequence that I've thought about and that the privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, has raised.

The bill is a very simple one; it's got one paragraph in it. It says that if you don't save your stuff and get it off to the archives, it's going to cost you. You're going to get fined up to \$50,000. That's an enormous chunk of money.

I just want to put it in perspective, and then I want to tell you what I think the unintended consequence might be when you put in fines of that magnitude. I appreciate where the member wants to go with this and I'm all in favour of all of the various rules relating to the saving of records and so on. They should be strictly enforced and so on.

1400

But here are some other fines for some other very serious matters in Ontario: stunt driving, where you risk getting killed, \$10,000; doing something under the Dog Owners' Liability Act—that is, you've got a pit bull that might kill or injure someone—\$10,000. Then you work your way down to breaking and entering, \$5,000; animal cruelty, \$1,000; possession of drugs for the purpose of trafficking, \$5,000; fraud, \$5,000; theft and forgery of credit cards, \$5,000; carrying a concealed weapon, \$5,000; pointing a firearm, \$5,000; possession of a restricted weapon with ammunition, \$5,000; threatening to cause death or harm, \$5,000; assault, \$5,000; assault causing bodily harm, \$5,000; assaulting a police officer or resisting arrest, \$5,000; production of amphetamines, mescaline or—and I can't pronounce it but another long name for a drug—\$5,000; failure to comply with a bail condition—now, that's a serious one—\$5,000; impersonating a police officer, \$5,000.

When we flip to this legislation, if someone—an MPP, a staff person, anybody who is covered by the act—doesn't store their records properly, a \$50,000 fine.

Now, here's what Ann Cavoukian said about that issue. She said that legislation that levies a large fine on those who mismanage records acts as a deterrent to better record creation habits and specifically works against the spirit of the bill, as staff or people who are required to save the materials maintain a fear of being fined, and it drives them to not keep a written record, email record, that sort of stuff, but drives them to an oral culture, where they're sort of picking up the phone and doing all of their business on the phone because they are so fearful of this enormous fine of \$50,000.

I support the member's bill, but I think, following Ann Cavoukian's concern here, that if the maximum fine, like all of these other serious things, was \$5,000, that's enough to act as a deterrent, but it's not overkill in the sense that somebody who is doing emails and letters and so forth is going to be so petrified of slipping up and making a mistake and accidentally deleting something that, rather than run that risk of that enormous penalty, it's going to have the unintended consequence of driving them to do all of their business by oral communications. That's the unintended consequence of the bill.

I think the bill, if it was more reasonable in the maximum fine, something along the line of all these other fines that I've raised, would achieve the intent of what the member is trying to do, to put a penalty on there, but it wouldn't make people so fearful that they're afraid to communicate other than orally. So I would hope that the member would take that into consideration and perhaps amend that part dealing with the maximum fine.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill 102, An Act to amend the Archives and Record-keeping Act. Bill 102 is a much-needed piece of proposed legislation, but it is a sad comment on this government that measures have had to appear in a PMB rather than a government bill.

Any time someone wilfully destroys public documents, destroys archival records, there should be stiff and serious penalties, and this bill speaks to that. I sincerely hope the Liberals support this through second reading, through committee and on into law. If they are serious about learning from their mistakes and sincerely wish to honour the spirit of the ARA legislation, they will give their legislation real teeth.

Amid great fanfare, the Liberals passed the Archives and Recordkeeping Act in 2006. They passed it, and then they bypassed it. They maintained what staff in their Premier's office described to the Information and Privacy Commissioner as a "verbal culture." Staff were encouraged to talk through things face to face rather than writing anything down. The Premier's office had daily meetings where no notes were ever taken.

Even on power plants, the only written legacy of a meeting was often the email proposing a get-together date. When staff wrote things down, projects were given code names, and what little documentation there was never benefited from the Archives and Recordkeeping Act. The only constant seems to be that everybody figured somebody else was being responsible, and whatever made it through all of those filters was often deleted or destroyed. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I have to assume that this was commonplace throughout the government and that it was true for every embarrassing episode of full-blown scandal of the last six years.

The Liberals have worked hard and long to escape responsibility and rewrite history. All of this was in defiance of a law the government itself created, and all of

it in disrespect to the elected members of this House and the people of Ontario—an insult to our democracy.

In her Deleting Accountability report, the Information and Privacy Commissioner notes: “In the case of the former Minister of Energy and the former Premier’s office, the Archives of Ontario template schedules were never adopted. Nor did these offices prepare alternative records retention schedules that would have been approved by Archives of Ontario, in accordance with the ARA. Therefore, contrary to sections 11 and 12 of the ARA, the former minister’s office and the Premier’s office did not prepare records schedules for submission to the archivist for his approval. In fact, I was advised that despite having been provided with copies of relevant templates, these offices operated in the absence of approved records retention schedules.”

This vast blank spot fundamentally undermines this government’s accountability and raises many serious questions about the record-keeping practices in all ministerial offices. Sadly, the possibility of broader deletions cabinet-wide cannot be ruled out until such time as the government offers credible proof to the contrary.

I am happy to support Bill 102, and I hope that it will meet with unanimous support here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I’ll be supporting this bill. It’s a good bill, presented by my colleague from Toronto–Danforth.

What it says is that we have a law in place, and it seems as if somehow the previous speaker from Oakville, when he says, “We need clear rules”—it confused me a little bit because we do have clear rules, and the clear rules are around Bill 152 that your government introduced. They’re very, very clear. They say:

“(a) to ensure that the public records of Ontario are managed, kept and preserved in a useable form for the benefit of present and future generations”—couldn’t be clearer. It could not be clearer. It’s not as if you need another bill to make it clear because it’s very transparent.

“(b) to foster government accountability and transparency by promoting and facilitating good recordkeeping by public bodies....” It couldn’t be clearer than that.

“(c) to encourage the public use of Ontario’s archival records as a vital resource for studying and interpreting the history of the province.”

These were the objectives of your Bill 152 that you presented in this Legislature in the year 2006. So we don’t lack clear rules. What we lack is a penalty that can act as a deterrence when people actually don’t obey the law.

So when the member of Oakville—I don’t know. I want to tell you that if the Tories were involved in this imbroglio and you were in opposition, you would love such a bill, and you probably would have supported the \$50,000—in fact, you might have said it should be \$100,000 because you know how bad they are, right? I suspect you would have said that, and I suspect most Liberals would have supported this bill without any

hesitation, and they wouldn’t want to even negotiate the amount, I suspect. I could be wrong.

So I think this is a good bill. To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: He makes an interesting point. He lists a whole number of penalties that people are subjected to when they break the law in different bills that we have in this province, and he says maybe we should negotiate this amount from \$50,000 to something lower. I suspect that might make sense. I think a fine of \$10,000 or \$15,000 or \$20,000 would be a deterrent, because if I’m a staffer and I’m involved in something as illegal as the destroying of vital information, then if I knew that I had to pay \$20,000, I’d be very careful. Even \$10,000 would be a big amount.

1410

But let’s talk about that amount. As we send that to committee, people might come forth and say, “Yes, \$50,000 may be a whole lot and \$25,000 might be okay. That might be a good deterrent.” I understand the argument the privacy commissioner makes that if it’s a huge amount, where we might consider it as a deterrent, it could in effect act against deference; I understand the logic. The point is that the current law has not deterred anybody, which has led the member from Toronto–Danforth to say we need to remind government members and their staff, when they break the law, that they’re subject to a penalty as a way of making sure they remember and not press delete rather quickly, as they have done with the cancellation of contracts they made on the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga.

That was a huge imbroglio. You guys paid dearly for that. Actually, we pay, and all the citizens of Ontario end up paying a huge amount of money: \$600 million, which I guess for Liberals is chump change and nothing to worry about. But it’s a whole lot of money we’ve got to worry about, and I think this penalty that the member suggests is a good one. It will act as a deterrent.

And yes, in committee we can determine whether that amount is just a little bit too high and maybe we should lower it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I’m pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak for a few moments about Bill 102, an Act to amend the Archives and Recordkeeping Act, 2006 to impose penalties for offences relating to public records of archival value. This bill comes to us standing in the name of the member for Toronto–Danforth. I want to compliment the member for Toronto–Danforth first of all for the fine gentleman that he is; and secondly, for the thoughtful, articulate and knowledgeable approach that he brings to this House. He chooses his words very carefully, and I think of the word “erudition” when I think of him. But he is a New Democrat, so I have to stop there.

At the same time—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You’re a nice guy too.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Thank you very much. It is a good bill. I think the members who have spoken so far have

contributed to this debate in a positive way. I think that the member for Trinity–Spadina made some good points.

I'd just like to reiterate quickly—of course, this comes from the report from the Information and Privacy Commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, *Deleting Accountability: Records Management Practices of Political Staff*. In her report she says that the Archives and Recordkeeping Act has several important purposes:

“(a) to ensure that the public records of Ontario are managed, kept and preserved in a usable form for the benefit of present and future generations;

“(b) to foster government accountability and transparency by promoting and facilitating good recordkeeping by public bodies; and

“(c) to encourage the public use of Ontario's archival records as a vital resource for studying and interpreting the history of the province.”

Of course, I think we all understand in this House how important government records are, and the fact that they should be maintained in the public interest. But as we know, and it has been a matter of public record now, I guess, in and of itself, certain political staff and various government ministers made an effort to delete emails that would have shed more light on the deliberations and discussions that led up to the cancellation of the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga. As we know, those decisions, one of which was announced, actually, during an election campaign, cost the taxpayers and electricity ratepayers of the province at least \$585 million.

This bill is very timely, of course, because as we know, the government announced yesterday that, I believe, on the 8th of October, the Auditor General's report, which will give us more information about the true cost of the cancellation of the Oakville plant, will finally be released. This is something that we have awaited for some months. We knew it was coming. The government, I think, has dragged its heels on the release of that report, unfortunately, but they can't delay it forever. Of course, next week, we'll have a chance to see what the Auditor General has to say about it.

I think that it's also important to point out that the rationale for this bill, really, is to respond to the Liberals' efforts to conceal documents pertaining to the decision-making process around the cancellation of the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants during the 2011 election. It follows our caucus's request for an OPP investigation, which I understand is still under way, and an NDP complaint to the Office of Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario.

The member for Toronto–Danforth alleged that staff in the office of the Minister of Energy had deleted emails about the gas plant cancellations, and we know that's true now. The scope of Dr. Cavoukian's investigation was expanded when she learned that in January 2013 political staff in the office of then-Premier McGuinty had approached the Secretary of Cabinet about how to permanently delete email and other electronic material. In the report that the Information and Privacy Commissioner presented to this Legislature in June, she indicated that

there needed to be legislative changes to exact serious penalties on political staff who wilfully destroy emails that should be maintained and archived for the public record.

As I say, Mr. Speaker, this bill is timely. It is in the public interest. It responds to a recommendation of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. It's a good bill. I believe that we should all support it. I think that it's necessary. It's in the public interest, and I would encourage all members to vote for it when the vote comes this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join members of my caucus, and it seems as though there's somewhat of a consensus here that this bill will be approved and see its way through to committee. I want to thank my colleague the member from Toronto–Danforth, whom I had the honour and pleasure of sitting on the justice committee with investigating the gas plant scandal for a couple of weeks.

I recall the deep frustration that we had, that all committee members shared—maybe not all, but certainly those on the opposition shared—when looking into the issue and trying to gain access to the vital information that would have given us the answer as to how we got here in the first place.

If necessity is, of course, the mother of all invention, then this bill certainly is born out of the necessity to close this loophole that has been identified by our privacy commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, who states quite clearly that the rules as they are in place today don't go far enough to act as a deterrent for members of the crown, elected members or their staff in terms of making sure that everyone knows that these are not private documents. They are public documents. What that means is that they don't belong to you or me or anyone in this building. They belong to the people of the province of Ontario.

That's the message that I have heard loud and clear, along with the need and the real desire of the people to see somebody either monetarily punished—I know many members have heard that somebody should be going to jail because of what happened here, the massive amount of dollars that were lost and vaporized due to the cancellation of the gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga. This is really the least, I think, that we can do.

This comes, again, as a practical, pragmatic approach, a piece of legislation brought forward by the New Democratic Party similar to another piece of legislation that was born out of the same scandal, the need for a Financial Accountability Office. That, really, is the reason we put forward this very practical bill: to ensure that the people knew that the government's expenditures were identified, looked at and audited by an independent third party prior to any money being spent. That's something that has a lot of foresight and a lot of progressive aspects to it, and one that, again, the government had the good sense to adopt.

We hope, and I sense, again, that there is at least tacit approval by the government side to take this bill on and to make it a measure of law. Should the \$50,000 penalty for destroying documents stand or not? That will be a question we deal with at committee. I can tell you that many members in my community of Essex county would like to see it be more than \$50,000; they probably would like to see a \$100,000 threshold, something that absolutely, completely, ultimately deters members of the crown and elected members from ever destroying public documents as it relates to the interests of the public.

1420

This is a good bill. It's one that I applaud. I certainly support it. I know the member from Toronto—Danforth has put a lot of thought into it, and it's one that makes good sense here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Vaughan.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I've had the chance to listen to a lot of the discussion here this afternoon—fascinating discussion—and I think I do understand what the thrust of this particular proposed bill is.

There are a couple of things that I did want to highlight for the House, some of the very serious actions that have been taken by the Ontario Liberal government with respect to these details that we're discussing here this afternoon.

To date, this government held an all-staff meeting back in April to provide general information about recordkeeping obligations. Chiefs of staff have been designated now as being accountable for proper records management in their offices. We've developed further mandatory training for all political staff in consultation with the archivist for Ontario, and with the assistance of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and the Integrity Commissioner.

There has been a directive that's been issued from the Premier with respect to the importance of proper record-keeping. We've also held small group training sessions with the majority of ministers' offices. This training should actually be—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Toronto—Danforth has two minutes in response.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you very much, Speaker, and my thanks to all those members who spoke to address the bill today. There are some things that I think need to be clarified and then I'll make a pitch.

Mr. Flynn and Mr. Zimmer both talked about other penalties for other crimes and noted that the fine for carrying a concealed weapon was about \$5,000. But if you actually go and look at the Criminal Code, you can get up to five years in jail. The fine and six months in jail are part of a lesser charge, so the comparison they made was not an accurate comparison.

The other thing that I want to point out—Mr. Flynn spoke to this and I've heard this many times; I heard it from former Premier McGuinty, under whose watch the Archives and Recordkeeping Act was put into law, that

the act was unclear, confusing and needed to be sorted out. I actually think the act is pretty straightforward. Once you grasp the spirit of it, everything else flows from that, and Peter Wallace, the head of the civil service, made that very clear when he testified before our committee.

There isn't a question here of a lack of clarity. There is a question of people realizing that they can break this law with impunity. There are no real consequences beyond embarrassment, and, frankly, that has to change. I know that issues come and go. This Legislature, this government and future governments will be seized by other crises—no question. Training sessions will come into being; they'll go out of fashion.

Frankly, Speaker, anyone who comes in here as a minister or ministerial staff in senior positions needs to know they can get in trouble for destroying public records. If they knew that, everything else follows.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' business.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ELECTION ADVERTISING TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE DES GROUPES D'INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

Mr. Nicholls moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 101, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising / Projet de loi 101, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le financement des élections à l'égard de la publicité électorale de tiers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's with great pleasure that I rise today to speak to my bill, the Special Interest Groups Election Advertising Transparency Act.

This bill seeks to amend the Election Finances Act to make sure that special interest groups play by a fair set of rules. What we see today is a true disservice to our democracy. While individuals have limitations placed on the amount that they can donate to parties and parties have strict election spending regulations, special interest groups have been able to fly under the radar. These parties, such as powerful union groups or corporate interests, are able to spend millions of dollars on smear campaigns against individual candidates or parties. The opinions of voters in a parliamentary democracy should be based on the platforms of the respective parties, not on expensive attack campaigns from unaccountable groups.

Queen's University professor Jonathan Rose weighed in on third party election advertising. Here's what he said: "Some limitations are necessary in order to have a level playing field and in order to ensure that the

participants in an election are political parties and citizens.” Unfortunately, the playing field is by no means level.

Ontario Chief Electoral Officer Greg Essensa’s 2012-13 annual report called for legislative changes to third party advertising. In the report, he suggested that imposing caps on third party spending be considered, noting that the Ontario election laws do not specifically ban collusion between political parties and third parties.

Mr. Essensa also feels that special interest groups, who do not have to run a candidate on the ballot, should not be allowed to take over the democratic process. Instead, he believes in reforms such as introducing a cap on the amount they can spend on election ads.

The Chief Electoral Officer’s greatest concern, however, is the exponential rate at which unrestricted special interest advertising spending is growing. From the 2007 general election to the 2011 election, the amount spent by third party interest groups tripled to almost \$7 million. In fact, in the 2011 election, the biggest third party advertising group spent more than the NDP’s total advertising budget.

Let’s let that sink in for just a moment: A special interest group, a group that did not run a single candidate on the ballot, outspent the NDP on political advertising during an election. They actually outspent 19 of the 21 registered political parties combined. That, Mr. Speaker, is simply not right. It erodes our democratic process and sets a dangerous precedent. This bill is about doing the right thing and safeguarding our democracy.

Ontario is currently heading toward an American style of elections, where massive unions, corporations and special interests spend tens of millions of dollars to have their issues heard above all others. In the past two general elections, a message has been sent to the rest of Ontario that democracy in this great province can, in fact, be influenced by those with the deepest pockets. Ontarians who cannot afford a million-dollar ad campaign are forced to watch large interest groups drive the discussion.

I quote the leader of the NDP in a National Post article in April of this year. She said, “What we don’t want to see though is that small voices totally get drowned out by big voices, and so we have to find some balance in that regard.” She goes on to say, “We’re one of the provinces that hasn’t done any of that real reform when it comes to election finances, and I think it’s time that we look at it.”

Speaker, the leader of the third party, Ms. Horwath, is right. Ontario is well behind the curve on this issue. Quebec, British Columbia, Alberta, New Brunswick and the federal government have all adopted controls over third party advertising. Federal legislation was actually introduced by the Liberal government in 1999. British Columbia’s legislation also places a total cap of \$150,000 and an additional riding limit of \$3,000. My bill, Bill 101, is also in line with the limits found in federal legislation.

There was once a time when Ontario would lead the way in our Confederation. Today, we find ourselves trying to catch up to jurisdictions across the country. This did not have to be the case.

1430

In 2011, my colleague the member from Wellington-Halton Hills put forward a motion to end third party collusion with political parties. Sadly, the Liberal government of the day voted against transparency. I look forward to him providing his insight in this debate.

While Kathleen Wynne voted against transparency in 2011, she appears to have now realized the importance of protecting our democracy. I quote the Premier in a National Post article dated April 8, 2013: “I’m very interested in looking at the recommendations and open to looking at changes that could be made.”

In the same article, the Attorney General, John Gerretsen, went a step further by stating, “The notion of putting a spending limit on third parties certainly strikes me as something that’s well worth looking into.”

In a rare example of agreement, the leaders of all three major parties expressed their willingness for reforms back in the spring, and I quote from a Toronto Star editorial dated April 11, 2013: “NDP leader Andrea Horwath also favours a look at third party spending limits as part of a wider examination of election finance rules, and Premier Kathleen Wynne has said she is willing to consider Essensa’s recommendations.”

“Given all that, there’s no acceptable excuse to maintain the status quo. Queen’s Park needs to turn off the lights and declare the party over when it comes to unfettered third party election spending.”

Seeing that all three major parties have publicly expressed the need to address unchecked third party election advertising, I hope we can find some common ground today.

To those watching at home: We must ask ourselves every day in this House, what province do we want to live in? The decisions that we make each time we stand up and vote can have a tremendous impact on the future of our province. What is more important than safeguarding our democracy, the very backbone of our political system in Ontario?

Right now, massive special interest groups have the ability to outspend major parties, with almost zero accountability or transparency. They are able to influence the political agenda of this province without being accountable to voters or putting any names on the ballot.

An example is the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association—OECTA, as they are so well called. Their executive forced, in the last election, \$60 per teacher so that they could raise a \$3-million war chest, and they did this without even getting the consent from their membership. No union or business should be spending millions to influence elections. Is this the Ontario that we want? Most certainly not. Instead, we must strive for an Ontario that offers a level playing field.

This is why this bill calls for an overall cap of \$150,000 for a general election and \$3,000 for an individual riding. The modest amount still allows for groups to have their say—which is an integral part for the health of any democracy—without being able to control discussion through million-dollar ad campaigns.

To stop massive interest groups from breaking the law, you have to make the penalty a real deterrent. That is why the penalty for going over spending would be a fine equal to 10 times the amount, the full amount of the expenses incurred, not just the amount in excess of the applicable limit. These third party advertisers are used to operating with millions of dollars in their election advertising budgets. Any lesser fine would simply be a slap on the wrist to them.

Yesterday in question period, Premier Wynne stated that the members opposite are free to make their own decision about my bill. Speaker, I sincerely hope that this is the case. Allow them to vote their conscience, doing what is right and what must be done to defend and protect our democracy.

Limits on third party spending have been brought forward by Liberal, NDP and PC governments across the country. While we certainly have our differences, there are times when we must forget the partisanship games in favour of solid policy. Anything else would be a disservice to our constituents.

If the government wishes to keep the Premier's promise to tackle the issue of unchecked third party election spending, they must support this bill. If there are any issues that the Liberals or the NDP have with Bill 101, let's take the collaborative approach and let's strengthen this bill in committee.

I urge you to pass the second reading of this bill, and let's get it into committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to introduce Runnymede school, who are here—thank you for coming—and a volunteer from my office, Gabriel.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As always, it is an honour to stand here today to debate bills that come before us in the House on behalf of our constituents—in my particular case, the wonderful riding of Essex, the wonderful people of Essex, who I'm sure have great interest in this bill and many others that we see.

I thank the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex, who is in the neighbouring riding, for bringing forward this important bill, one that I think is, interestingly enough, quite timely, and I wonder about the timing of the presentation of this bill. I wonder if it doesn't seek in some perverted way to capitalize on what we've seen happen over the last couple of weeks in this House, and in the last couple of years, I think.

At its core, the bill amends the Election Finances Act to expand third party advertising to include "any issue within the legislative competence of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario." Further, the following limits are imposed on third party advertising: \$150,000 during a

general election, and \$3,000 per riding in a general election or during a by-election.

I don't know, Speaker. I'm not up on the current market value of what it costs to put an ad forward; I truly don't know. I certainly know, during the context of an election, that we all do advertising. It comes out of our budget. We are limited, through our election finance laws, in terms of how much we can spend; it's capped. I believe that's great, in fact.

We saw a similar move at the federal level that was born out of AdScam. Jean Chrétien enacted campaign finance reform where it did then cap donations to federal parties and, of course, I think it capped spending limits during elections. Of course, those are things that we always have to keep our eye on, because private interests, special interests, are always looking to infuse their agenda into those of political parties, and individual members, I might add, on some occasions—as we saw, and as we believe potentially could have been the motivating factor for the introduction of Bill 74, what is now widely known as the EllisDon bill, that found its way buried into an omnibus bill, a programming motion, that seeks to fast-track its way through this chamber without debate, without full scrutiny, and without fully knowing the ramifications of that bill, although we do know that it will singularly help one special interest, one massive corporate interest. So we're seeing that happen.

1440

This bill speaks to campaign advertising, and I think, again, at the heart of it is an attack on what is known as the Working Families coalition. That's what this bill is attempting to do: limit that organization's ability to have third party advertising during election campaigns.

I understand the frustration of the member and of their caucus. They make no bones about the fact that they are no friends of working families, or at least they are no friends of the Working Families coalition. But they've singled out that organization as being the impetus of the need for this legislation. In a sense, I guess I agree that, yes, there is a war there. They've specifically targeted the Progressive Conservative Party. I can tell you that I, as a New Democrat, have not benefited from any actions on the part of the Working Families coalition, nor have I been hindered by them. So I really don't know. They don't really appear in southwestern Ontario, at least in my riding. But, again, give it time.

But I do know that they are one of many special interest groups that find their way, either overtly or covertly, into the agendas of political parties, and I'll bring it back to Bill 74, which is a bill that seeks to aid one, singular company, EllisDon, a \$2-billion-a-year company that certainly is a large component of our economy but one that I don't think necessarily needs the assistance of this Legislature to further its profit margin, to say the least.

I would say: How far do we go here? How far does this bill go in terms of limiting free expression and limiting free speech? The member from Chatham—Kent—is it still Chatham—Kent—Essex, until we change

that, which I know the member is looking forward to changing?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Chatham–Kent–Leamington.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, Chatham–Kent–Leamington—let's not forget the great community of Leamington, which is an important community in our region.

At what point does this bill start to infringe on the free expression of thought and the rights and ability for people to come together and pool their resources to deliver a message? Again, I don't know if the cap limits the ability to spread that message, whether it be on normal traditional media or new media. But I think the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex states that the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association pooled their resources to deliver a message. I've seen that the Ontario Nurses' Association do the same thing, I've seen the Ontario Pharmacists Association; I've seen a whole host of associations that pool their resources to deliver a message, whether it be through, again, all various sorts of media.

I wonder at what point that message, which I think the general public needs to hear and is a part of the electoral process, gets limited through this bill. I wonder if we ought not in this House, in this chamber, to try to identify what our parties stand for ultimately, to indicate, as they do in the United States—they identify that those broadcasts, those advertisements are responsible and are acknowledged and are approved by either the leader or the party. We do it on our signs; we do it on all of our election literature. Maybe we need a vocal prompt, an audible prompt, to let people know that this is a political advertisement that is approved by either one of the party leaders or the party officials. We'll see.

I'm being told by my gracious whip that I should wrap it up. I do appreciate the time to discuss this bill, and I look forward to hearing debate from other members.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd like to take this opportunity to draw members' attention to the gallery, where we have a former member for Kitchener Centre and Kitchener in the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Mr. Wayne Wettlaufer. Welcome.

Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to have this opportunity to stand in my place here in the House today and provide some of my comments and my thoughts with respect to Bill 101, the Special Interest Groups Election Advertising Transparency Act, 2013, which I understand the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has brought forward. I did listen very closely to the comments made by the sponsoring member, and, of course, also to the comments made by the member from Essex. I know there will be other members who will be speaking in the course of the afternoon, and I look forward to hearing what a lot of them have to say.

This is a very interesting topic, and I think it is the kind of topic that should from time to time be discussed here in the Legislature because it does impact how we conduct what takes place during election campaigns.

Before I delve into where the system in Ontario currently finds itself, there are a couple of things that I do

want to talk about. Actually, I did notice that in the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex's original debate points, he did use the phrase—at least once that I heard, possibly more than once—"common ground." He did kind of emphasize when he was using those words, he said, "We need to find common ground." He kind of underscored the importance of that concept.

Speaker, if I could, just for a quick second, say that I think that's a very important concept, not just as it relates to this particular bill or any bill that we discuss here in this House, but I can tell you, as someone who's recently taken on the volunteer position of helping my party deal with something that's as important as platform development outreach, that we've actually undertaken a very interesting initiative using that very concept as the foundation—the notion of finding common ground.

That idea of common ground goes right to the very heart of the leadership style of Premier Kathleen Wynne and this Ontario Liberal government. It has for the last number of months; it has for the last 10 years. Common ground is very, very important.

I can report to this House, for whatever it's worth, for those who are interested in trying to find common ground to move the province forward, that for folks who want to actually participate in that platform development process I referenced a second ago, you can visit our party website and get on board. Whether you're a party member or not, Speaker, you can actually participate to find that common ground that the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex talked about a second ago. It's very easy to access the Ontario Liberal Party's platform development process by visiting our website and participating, because finding common ground is very crucial if we're going to move the province forward.

I will note that that is remarkably different from the way in which certain other parties, particularly the Ontario PC Party, have gone about seeking to produce ideas to put in the window for Ontario's residents and Ontario's businesses. Spending two years at the Albany Club and elsewhere, spending energy, time and resources putting out 14 white papers on various policies and then going into a policy convention and sort of hiding those, putting those away in a drawer, and talking about 24 resolutions that are completely different—that speaks to an information-gathering process that doesn't seek to find common ground. That is consistent with the behaviour—it kind of goes to the DNA of that party, a party that hasn't sought to seek common ground on all of the other important issues that have come before us here in this House over the last number of years. Whether it's budget deliberations when their leader and their party announce, before a budget is even really thought about, before a budget is even really developed—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: A point of order, Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. A point of order?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I would appreciate, Speaker, if the member from Vaughan would actually speak directly to Bill 101, as opposed to speaking around other topics.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for the point of order.

To the member: Carry on, and I hope you bring that back into the bill.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Absolutely, Speaker. I appreciate that, but I was in my own unique way trying to pay tribute to that member from Chatham–Kent–Essex for bringing forward the bill today, who in seeking so enthusiastically to locate and land on common ground—I applaud him for that because that sets him remarkably apart from everyone else with which he serves on that side of the House.

If I can just say, as I was saying a second ago, that from our standpoint, the leadership style of Premier Kathleen Wynne and the folks who are serving on this side of the House are all about making sure Ontario moves forward in the most productive, prosperous way possible, especially with respect to our economy. That's why we are seeking common ground, so that we can keep investing in people, so that we can keep investing in infrastructure and so that we can support a dynamic and innovative business climate to keep moving our province forward.

So here on Bill 101, I think it's important to make sure the record does reflect that over the last number of years here in the province of Ontario, we have worked very hard to create the kind of system around what governs the behaviour in the course of election campaigns. There are a number of things that I'd like to call to the attention of the House with respect to the existing framework around the Election Finances Act, and how these things are regulated.

From our standpoint, of course, we on this side of the House are always extremely open to finding ways and engaging in conversations on ways to improve Ontario's democratic process. I know that's what we're doing here today, but I just want to underscore for the members opposite and for the folks watching at home, be they folks living in my community of Vaughan or your community of Scarborough, people who might live in places like Niagara Falls or whatever the case may be—for anybody watching at home—we are determined to engage in conversations and have constructive dialogue about what's taking place in Ontario's democratic process.

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It's also important to note, Speaker, that from my perspective, Ontario already has important rules in place that do help to ensure that really important balance is struck between transparency and free speech in the course of our election campaigns. Our government actually introduced third-party advertising rules in Ontario for the very first time in 2007 with respect to reforms to election legislation.

So while I understand that those may not have gone far enough for the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, I just think it is important to note that, given where these rules sat when we first came to office back in 2003—and as I said in the House yesterday, yesterday was the 10-

year anniversary, as the Ontario Liberal government, of our first election win back in 2003.

From our standpoint, be it Premier Wynne or former Premier McGuinty, the yardsticks with respect to finding that balance between transparency and free speech moved. The ball moved on that back in 2007. Significant reforms were brought forward. While I do appreciate that the sponsoring member may not feel that they have gone far enough, I think it is important to make sure that the record reflects that under current rules, third parties that spend \$500 or more on election advertising are in fact required to register with the Chief Electoral Officer.

Those registered third parties must also report to that same Chief Electoral Officer on their election advertising expenses. If those same election advertising expenses that they have reported to the Chief Electoral Officer exceed \$5,000—if they go beyond the \$5,000 mark—these reports must be audited.

Again—because I said it a second ago, but I really do believe that it bears repeating—it's extremely important, when we're discussing something like election campaigns and spending that takes place by third parties, that we don't inadvertently go out of our way to kind of tamp down or eliminate free speech. Free speech is something that is fundamental to what we're doing here in this House. Free speech is also something that's fundamental to the health of our democracy. But at the same time, I think that these rules, these reforms that were brought forward in 2007 by our government, do reflect that it's important to find that balance, to strike that balance between the transparency and free speech components.

A couple of other things that I want to stress: The Election Finances Act already distinguishes between advertising expenses incurred by third parties and advertising expenses incurred by political parties, constituency associations, candidates and others acting on their behalf. It's also important to note that, under the existing legislation in the province of Ontario, advertising promoting a party or a candidate and undertaken with the knowledge and consent of the party or candidate is considered a contribution and therefore already subject to applicable rules and limits. And there are other elements that exist in the current framework around the rules that govern the activity that we're discussing here in the House today.

I'm not standing in my place to suggest that the system is necessarily currently perfect. I'm not sure of any regime or system that is perfect on any of the topics that come before us for deliberation in this House.

Part of our job is to make sure that we keep improving upon circumstances, that we keep improving upon the condition in which we find things, so I understand, and I do respect that the member has brought forward these suggestions. I'm just not quite sure that these particular suggestions are proportionate with the problem that he believes exists with respect to this particular existing legislation. I think it's an issue with respect to proportionality.

I said at the outset of my comments today that though I do respect the fact that he himself at least, that par-

ticket member, has spoken very clearly about the need and the desire to strive for common ground, and how that sets him so remarkably apart from so many of his colleagues in that caucus, I'm not quite sure that I really and truly can accept the motivation from which this particular bill springs. That's actually not the best and most eloquent statement that I've delivered in the House so far, that particular sentence, but I will say that I'm not 100% sure that the motivation behind this is quite as pure as some of the comments that members on that side of the House have made thus far.

Having said all of that, I think we're in a place in Ontario today where, by virtue of initiatives, by virtue of the reforms that have come forward in this House, brought forward by our government back in 2007, like I said a second ago, we have managed to find balance. Again, I want to stress that it doesn't mean that improvement can't always be brought to bear. It doesn't mean that we can't always strive to make sure—the balance may need to be finely tuned.

I just believe in this case, Speaker, that the proposed legislation here in Bill 101, the Special Interest Groups Election Advertising Transparency Act, 2013, is not necessarily the solution that's needed in this particular case. I think, again, it speaks to the issue of proportionality. It speaks to the issue of, is there an ulterior motive? Frankly, even listening to the comments from the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex that were sort of interspersed in those comments that were being made, some thinly veiled references to certain organizations, I'm not 100% sure, again, that the motivation is pure on this one.

Having said all that, I do look forward to the rest of the debate that we're going to see over the course of the afternoon, hearing from other members of the PC caucus and the NDP caucus, and I look forward to the vote that will take place.

I just want to say again—I'd say this to any member bringing forward a private member's bill, and I know I was very proud to bring forward my first back in the spring. I think it takes a great deal of initiative, and I respect that the member has brought this one forward at this particular point in time. Again, I look forward to the debate that's about to continue to take place. But I think on this one, the reforms and the regime that exist currently in Ontario do strike the right balance between transparency and free speech, so, Speaker, I won't personally be supporting Bill 101.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I would disagree with the former speaker on Bill 101, the act to amend the Election Finances Act. I think it is the right piece of legislation. It was the right piece of legislation in BC. It was the right piece of legislation in Alberta. It was the right piece of legislation in Quebec. It was the right piece of legislation in New Brunswick. And it was the right piece of legislation for the government of Canada. I don't know how Ontario would differ from those jurisdictions. I think

this is the right piece of legislation, and it was long overdue.

In Ontario, I would say, from my personal experience and the experience of everyone in this House, each candidate in the province of Ontario is limited as to how much money he can spend during an election. Why would that be? That is so that everybody who has their name on the ballot has a fair chance at getting elected. You can't spend more than your election limits.

Every party in Ontario, the Conservatives, the Liberals and the NDP, along with the other—what is it?—56 registered parties in Ontario, have provincial guidelines that allow them to only spend so much money in the province of Ontario during a writ period. Why is that? It's so there is an element of fairness, so that only the policies of the parties that are running can be judged. You cannot buy an election in Ontario.

Those spending ceilings, spending limits, are very important to democracy in this country. In the last three general elections in Ontario, third parties—not registered political parties but third parties in Ontario—have distorted those three elections.

Chief among them, I would say, was the Working Families coalition, which incidentally has nothing to do with working families and has everything to do with big unions. They spent millions of dollars. In the 2011 election, according to the Toronto Star, they spent \$2.3 million. According to other people that I've heard estimates from, it was \$5 million or \$6 million. I've heard one estimate as high as \$9 million. If indeed it was \$9 million that the Working Families coalition spent in the 2011 election, that would mean they spent more money than the Liberals, the NDP and the Conservatives combined. Even if it was only \$2.3 million, that is as much as any one party spent during that election. It has a huge influence on the outcome of the election, and yet that third party has no limit as to how much they can spend.

1500

I would suggest to the government, if they don't wish to support this bill, then they should take the spending limits off individual candidates and registered parties in the province of Ontario so that we can all spend as much as we want and we can buy elections in Ontario, similar to what they do south of the border, where limits are so high as to be unusable. I understand that Mr. Obama in the last election spent just under a billion dollars to win the presidency of the United States.

Mr. John O'Toole: Where did he get the money?
Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He had to raise that money.
Mr. Rick Nicholls: How is he doing so far?
Mr. Ted Chudleigh: How is he doing so far? Not so well, I would say.

I would like to support this piece of legislation. I would like to say it's long overdue in Ontario. Third party advertising is distorting our political system. It is having a negative influence on democracy in Ontario, and I would like to see it end.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have the opportunity to speak to this issue. I want to speak to what I hear on a daily basis from the Conservative Party. Their attack is really on the Working Families coalition. Daily you hear this name Pat Dillon, who, I'm sure, doesn't mind having his name being pronounced in this chamber on a regular basis. That's probably true. The Conservative Party spits out venom against the Working Families coalition and Pat Dillon daily. It's a virulent attack against Pat Dillon and the Working Families coalition daily. It's vitriol. It's vituperate. It's everything that begins with a V. They do this daily. I say to myself, why that hate for this group? It's because they don't support the Conservative Party. I understand that.

But I have to say, I know a whole lot of these people in the construction trades including the teachers' federations because I was a critic for a long time and a former teacher. I know a lot of these folks. Many of these federations did not support many of my colleagues either. So it's not as if they have been friends to us during the elections, because they have been good friends of the Liberal Party, by and large. God bless. I understand.

Is this the way to get at the problem, is one question. And secondly, is this hatred for unions, which the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex—and not just he but the leader of the Conservative Party and all the other members have a hatred for unions, which they describe as a powerful special interest group.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The union bosses. Often the Liberals will say that as well.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: There's no hatred. Don't put words in my mouth.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Virulence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, come to order. The member for Trinity-Spadina, will you please address the Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Through you, Speaker, "hatred" is too strong; you're absolutely right.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I totally reject that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. "Hatred" is too strong. I took that back. I withdraw that word. It's a bit too strong.

But if you hear the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and his leader and others, they talk about massive special interest group influence on the political and democratic process.

Now, I want you to see the flip side of this, Speaker, through you, to the member. But a short while ago, they and they had a special coalition called, as the member from Vaughan talked about, common ground, which sounds to me like this—common ground. That's what the member from Vaughan was saying, and but a short while ago, you had an understanding. You had a deal, as I understood it. And they were a bit heartbroken—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of the Environment, please keep the props down.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—that the Liberals, through their leader, the Premier, backed away from that deal, that common ground that you had. And that common ground was around a powerful special interest group, and I don't know whether you might agree with me or disagree with me. Who are they?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: EllisDon.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: EllisDon. Now, they have, in profits—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Minister, they have \$3 billion in profits. It's not chump change. It's not small, little pecunia. We're talking big, big pecunia, big, big money that has incredible influence on the political process and the democratic process of this country.

Oh my God, time is running out. I put to you this: From 2004 to 2011, here are the Liberal Party top donors: EllisDon—God bless—Toronto-Dominion Bank, Bank of Montreal, Bruce Power, Ontario Medical Association, Rogers Group.

The Conservative Party: Toronto-Dominion Bank—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

Point of order, the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Speaker, he seems to be a little confused. He's not speaking to Bill 101. He's referencing another bill that they so admirably call the EllisDon bill. We're not here to debate that bill. We're here to debate Bill 101 and the powerful meaning behind what 101 is all about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour for me to rise in the House this afternoon. I'm privileged to represent the people of Wellington-Halton Hills, and it's also an honour to have the chance to speak in support of Bill 101, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising, standing in the name of the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex. At the outset, I want to compliment the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex for the outstanding work he's doing in this House.

My wife, Lisa, grew up in Dresden, Ontario, and some of her family still live in Chatham. As such, I have visited Chatham over the years and try to keep up with the goings-on there. I know that we've had some great MPPs from Chatham. I think of Darcy McKeough and, more recently, Jack Carroll. But the name Rick Nicholls now stands with those dedicated parliamentarians from that great part of southwestern Ontario.

Rick Nicholls' presence in this 40th provincial Parliament strengthens it greatly. Rick Nicholls is one of the most positive people I have ever met. He approaches life seeing and believing the best in people. As the old saying goes, he sees the glass as half full, never half empty. For those of us who have been here for a while, he's a breath of fresh air. He's sincere and passionate, and he speaks eloquently and with conviction. He's

absolutely right when he says the election finance laws need to be reformed to level the playing field for all political parties in Ontario elections.

Bill 101 must amend the Election Finances Act to restrict so-called third party election advertising to \$150,000 and \$3,000 for individual ridings. It would impose serious fines on organizations that would seek to flout its provisions. This would, to say the least, trim the sails of some of the organizations that have spent millions of dollars on negative advertising, attacking one political party in the past three provincial elections.

For example, in the provincial election in the fall of 2011, the Working Families coalition, an amalgam of unions—the elementary teachers' union, the Catholic teachers' union and a number of other groups—spent something like \$6 million on political advertisements, mostly attacking our leader and our party. In comparison, our party spent \$5.1 million, I'm told the Liberals spent a similar amount and the New Democrats spent about \$1.8 million.

It's worthy of note that the provinces of British Columbia, Alberta, Quebec and New Brunswick, from west to east across the country, as well as the government of Canada, have all adopted controls over third party election advertising. In this country, and in our beloved province of Ontario, there has long been a consensus that there should be limits on campaign expenditures in the interests of fairness and of having a level playing field for all candidates and parties in the public interest. No one that I know of in this House would seriously propose to open this up so that the richest party could flood the airwaves with negative campaign messages, knowing their effectiveness in altering voter intentions is at least partially based on repetition.

The integrity of our system of parliamentary democracy rests on a number of assumptions. One of them is fairness. Another is that big money should not be permitted to buy an election. This is why candidates and parties can't just spend whatever they're able to raise on campaign expenses. There are firm limits as to what can be spent and serious consequences for those who ignore the law. If we accept the principle that there need to be limits on the campaign spending of candidates and parties, which I believe we do unanimously in this House, how can some members publicly defend the idea that there should be no limits on the campaign spending of pressure groups whose involvement is motivated by self-interest alone?

1510

I want to demonstrate the same optimism as the member for Chatham—Kent—Essex. I do not want to be cynical about the outcome of this vote. I hope the Liberal MPPs will carefully consider this matter on its merit.

I don't dispute that Liberal MPPs have consciences; I know that some of them do. Forgive me, Mr. Speaker, for observing that it just seems that when they leave their ridings and come to Queen's Park, some of them seem to leave their consciences at home. I hope today that that will not be the case.

I think it's important to also recognize that the only logical answer is that the Liberals believe they now have a competitive advantage because of this loophole in the election finances law, and that's why they say they're going to oppose this bill. They have their friends in the Working Families coalition. They have nurtured, cultivated and perpetuated this friendship with favourable consideration when it comes to policy and spending, and they'd like to keep things the way they are, thank you very much.

The only thing they've forgotten is that eventually—always—the truth comes out, and when the vast majority of Ontario voters become aware of this dirty little secret of the past 10 years of Ontario politics under the McGuinty and now the Wynne Liberals, Liberal MPPs will be forced to explain what has gone on, and they won't be able to do so.

When this happens, the verdict of the voters will not be kind to those Liberals who turned a blind eye to this cozy Working Families scheme during this lost decade of Liberal misrule in Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to stand in respect to the member from Chatham—Kent—Essex on Bill 101. I think the bill, the private member's bill, and his motive for doing it says a lot about the member himself. The member himself is a person—I believe my colleague Mr. Arnott said it very well too—who is a very genuine, sincere, trustworthy person. I think he's trying to look at the fairness principle as paramount to the whole discussion here today.

That was stated very much by Mr. Chudleigh as well, to say that we as members—every member here is allowed to spend a capped amount on the provincial election. A capped amount, whether it's federal—election spending is an important part of this whole discussion.

I think governments around the world have tried to deal with election spending. If it's fair for one, it's fair for all; I think that's important. The parties themselves are limited to an amount they can spend on media and other resources that they need in an election.

I look at it as fairness. All parties would agree, I believe, that outside pressure groups, whoever that happens to be—it could be EllisDon or anybody; it could be the teachers' unions or whatever—should not have unlimited spending limits. I think they have the right and freedom of speech to advertise and do their things, whether it's on condominiums or development issues or whatever. But at the end of the day, there should be a cap, and it should be publicly stated, what the spending is, so we know that it's more or less an attempt to influence the outcomes of an election.

That has clearly happened in a couple of the last elections. I've been here for 18 years. I was first elected in 1982—not provincially; I've served a number of years municipally as well. I believe that we are all accountable. At the end of the day, I believe Mr. Nicholls has the

absolute single focus here about the integrity of the process itself as being undermined.

We know how the social media and other aspects of it today—how things can go viral. In fact, if you looked at the social media in the election of Barack Obama—not against him personally, but it just was a groundswell, often, of misinformation or information.

So let's look at this carefully. It's about fairness in elections, so that everyone is treated fairly and there's no undue influence on the outcome of an election. I thank him for the genuine nature of his bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Chatham-Kent-Essex, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, I'd like to thank the members who spoke regarding this bill: the members from Essex, Vaughan, Wellington-Halton Hills, Trinity-Spadina and, of course, Durham.

There seems to have been a little bit of confusion with regard to this bill initially, because people were talking and confusing it with the EllisDon bill, which is all about corporations and their contributions to political parties. This bill is purely, strictly and solely about third party advertising during an election campaign.

I don't like saying that election campaigns are being bought. We, the PC Party, are really and truly the true supporters of real working families in Ontario. That's what we do.

The member from Vaughan had commented on the fact that it was his party, back in 2007, that had brought in some of the reforms to the Ontario Election Act. Well, what they did is they put in minimums, and that was it. I believe he was saying that if they pay \$500 or more, they have to be registered, and if they spend over \$5,000, then of course they have to be audited by Elections Ontario. That's fine. But what they didn't do is put a cap on it, which means you can run it to the moon, and that is just not right.

We in this Legislature are elected members. We are held accountable by our constituents, whereas these third party interests, be they corporations or unions or whoever, have no accountability. They are not elected. They do not have anyone on the ballot.

To run up the bill, to me and to my way of thinking, is just not right. We have to do something about it. Let's cap it.

I encourage all parties: Let's get this bill into committee after second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll vote on this item at the end of private members' bills.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: I move that, in the opinion of this House, in an effort to protect and inform homebuyers, energy labelling related to the energy efficiency of new and existing houses at time of sale should be enacted by the end of 2014.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in this Legislature today representing my riding of Ottawa-Orléans and to introduce this motion on home energy labelling. I have long been an advocate for improving the lives of Ontarians, first as a city councillor in Ottawa and now as an MPP. As a city councillor in the city of Ottawa in 2001, I worked alongside my colleagues trying to improve the energy ratings of our homes. Then in 2008, I tried again to improve the energy ratings of our homes, through my private member's bill the Home Energy Rating Act, which received all-party support. Again, in 2009, energy labelling for homes was on the table; this time it was incorporated in the Green Energy Act.

Today I rise to bring awareness of the need for home energy disclosure. I will continue to champion this cause so that all Ontarians are protected when purchasing their homes. As members of this House know, Ontario consumers are informed of the energy ratings for most of their household appliances, and the same goes for their cars. Yet there's no energy rating information for the largest purchase that Ontario consumers make: their home.

I'm humbled by the support I have received during my work on this motion. Today in the gallery, there are visitors who have been tireless advocates for the people of Ontario and our environment, and I urge the members of the house to listen to them. They include: Stephen Koch from Ottawa, a consultant and energy efficiency expert; Vladan Veljovic, president and CEO of Green-Saver, the oldest residential energy efficiency not-for-profit organization in Ontario; Chris Chopik, sales representative and chief agent of change at Sage Real Estate Ltd. Brokerage, and managing director of Evolution Green; and Stephen Hamilton from the Ontario Home Builders' Association. They know we all contribute greenhouse gases to this atmosphere. They know we can do better. We must take action to meet our carbon reduction targets in Ontario. That's why they are here to promote home energy efficiency disclosure.

We know that human influence has been the dominant cause of the observed warming since the 20th century. We know that just this summer, the carbon level passed 400 parts per million in our atmosphere. It's rising faster and faster. We cannot sit back and continue to emit greenhouse gases the way we do and the way we harm our environment.

We know that climate change is having a drastic impact on people's lives. People now have real financial and safety concerns. We all read about the Jersey storm about a year ago that resulted in over \$60 billion of damages.

Just last week, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change stated, "Continued emissions of greenhouse gases will cause further warming and changes in all components of the climate system. Limiting climate change will require substantial and sustained reductions

of greenhouse gas emissions.” It is time we take bold action and do our part.

1520

The government of Ontario has been exemplary in protecting our environment, but we can always do more. We have reduced our dependence on coal, and we will be out of coal-generated electricity next year. I'd like to thank all members of this House and all Ontarians for their support of that action. Ontario is the only sub-national government to get out of coal-generated electricity; we have to be proud of that.

The government of Ontario introduced the Ontario building code in 2006 that set out a road map for energy efficiency to be implemented in new houses and large buildings. The Ontario building code was fully implemented by 2012. It is time that the rest of the housing stock in this province catch up. Home builders are already doing their part by building homes for Ontarians to the highest standards; we must encourage that standard for older homes, too.

Families purchasing homes that were built before the new building code came into force may be faced with decades of high energy bills that could be reduced. Vladan Veljovic agrees with this initiative. He says, “With a history of helping over 60,000 Ontario homeowners with their energy efficiency needs, GreenSaver can authoritatively say that this initiative will help homeowners reduce their energy bills and empower them to make their own choices.

“It also deserves continued multi-partisan support, because it will protect consumers across the province, by providing basic information about their most expensive asset, something that is sorely lacking” in the market today.

In his 2009-10 annual report, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, Gord Miller, proclaimed, “Energy audits can help home buyers choose a more energy-efficient dwelling.” Again, in 2011, Miller claimed, “The intent of this commitment was to make the energy efficiency of a home transparent through a rating provided prior to the sale. This helps buyers understand a home's energy use and ongoing operating costs.”

Both of those reports, I have with me. The first was called Building Momentum—2012, actually, the last report—and Restoring Balance was the other one; it's good reading for anyone in this province. He goes on and states that inaction on energy efficiency labelling is harming the public interest.

In his most recent publication, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario writes, “Were the government to act on this promise, it would instantly increase homeowner interest in participating in a municipal retrofit program. The mandatory audit process would make clear to potential purchasers the significant difference in operating energy costs between homes that had undergone deep retrofits and similar homes that had not been retrofitted, and this information would likely become incorporated into the home's market value.”

I think it is time to listen to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario. The good news is that doing

this benefits the people of our province. The really good news is that these retrofit costs will generally be paid back through energy savings in 10 years or less.

The energy labelling of homes at time of resale has other benefits, too. Homeowners who have taken steps to retrofit their homes will now be rewarded for their investment. Cosmetic investments in homes, like new floors and new countertops, give added value to the home; why shouldn't it be the same for energy conservation upgrades, which generally you cannot see?

When we buy a car or an appliance, we know the energy efficiency of that product. Mileage and cost of fuel have always been a large consideration when buying a car. Why not for the purchase of a home, the largest purchase you will make in your lifetime? Families need to know the energy efficiency of a home at the time of purchase. This is consumer protection on the largest purchase most families will make.

Realtors pushed back and stopped the requirements for energy efficiency information when this was last proposed in my private member's bill in 2008 and when included in the Green Energy Act in 2009, in part claiming that this initiative would punish those with inefficient homes. With only 10% of homes in this province having undergone any efficiency upgrades, this will reward that 10% of Ontarians and incentivize others; it won't penalize the 90% who have inefficient homes. As I stated, this motion is simply to promote the disclosure of more information to the consumer.

I must ask myself, why doesn't the real estate industry want that? Bill Johnston, broker and manager at Bosley Real Estate Ltd. and former Ontario Real Estate Association board member, says this:

“The real estate brokerage community has resisted the notion of making energy audits mandatory at time of sale. Among the concerns is the thought that the audit would be an added expense in the selling process and the audit results, if poor, could be used as a bargaining chip by buyers in the negotiation.

“The same opposition was levelled at the concept of property inspections when they were introduced to the Toronto market in the early 1980s.

“Real estate professionals thought that the extra expense was unwarranted and the report would be used to beat up sellers in the negotiation process. As it turned out, inspections became common practice in short order, because they made so much sense.

“Why wouldn't a buyer want to have professional advice concerning the physical condition of the property he or she is buying?

“And what buyer wouldn't appreciate having professional input regarding the ‘running costs’ of his or her biggest asset? Energy audits and energy-saving retrofits benefit homeowners and governments, because reduced energy use leads to reduced infrastructure costs and future generations have less pollution.”

Other jurisdictions all over North America, Europe and Australia are well on their way to energy-retrofitting their housing stock. Ontario can use existing legislation

to move this forward. We also have a plan to help Ontario families pay for the home improvement if they wish to make their homes more efficient.

The legislation in Ontario has been changed to permit the local improvement act to facilitate the home energy efficiency retrofits. This means that individual property owners can get help in carrying out their energy improvements, obtain the financing, and the municipalities can then collect back the same as taxes, as the Environmental Commissioner has laid out in his recent report, *Building Momentum: Provincial Policies for Municipal Energy and Carbon Reductions*.

"The inclusion of a home energy audit into the information that would be made available to all prospective homeowners would be instrumental in building market awareness and transformation and allow for the fair and objective comparison of ongoing utility costs associated with that property.

"It would also be a key component of a comprehensive energy efficiency program that could be delivered as part of LIC financing amendment made by the province of Ontario in October 2012 that would not only make our housing stock more efficient but will also greatly foster a local energy-efficient economy base and retain energy dollars in our local communities." This was said by Gabriella Kalapos of the Clean Air Alliance.

Local businesses, contractors and labourers will see the benefits from energy upgrades. Tens of thousands of jobs will be created. Certified energy auditors can perform faster, lower-cost energy labelling through new systems under development. The Minister of Energy can phase in the energy efficiency disclosure so that owners selling their homes or purchasers buying the home will not be held up in their transactions.

Ontario, in a few years, can have most of our homes energy-efficient. It would lower the cost of home ownership, and at no additional cost. I ask the members of this Legislature to support this motion. The home purchaser, the consumer, will be protected. Our air quality will be improved. Good jobs will be created. Our homes will be more comfortable. Retrofits will pay for themselves through energy savings.

I believe in the ability of this House to put aside partisan politics and do the right thing. I believe that we can move forward with a culture of conservation in this province. I believe that we all share the same commitment to the people of the province, and I do not believe that one organization should set environmental policy. I challenge the Ontario Real Estate Association to meet with the Minister of Energy and other stakeholders and protect home buyers as well as sellers.

I invite all three parties to support this important motion so we can protect and inform consumers, save Ontario families money and protect the environment for our children and grandchildren.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to share a few points about motion 44, which was moved by the member for

Ottawa-Orléans. In fact, I had a good opportunity to travel recently—last year—with the member for Ottawa-Orléans to the Great Lakes environmental legislators' conference, where we had a good time, got to know each other a bit better, and I definitely know his sense of commitment to the environment.

Although I share the member's concern for conserving energy, unfortunately I do not share his view on how to make that happen. That's because I believe Ontario homeowners are responsible and environmentally aware. They understand the importance of energy conservation when it comes to both managing personal expenses and protecting our environment, so they shouldn't be blamed for 10 years of government failure on energy conservation. Instead, Ontarians should be commended for making the right choices and rewarded for their efforts. Unfortunately, the Liberals do not share this view. What's the reason? They actually think Ontarians are not concerned with the energy consumption of their home.

1530

On this side of the House, we know that's not true. In 2010, the Liberals reneged on their commitment to provide half the funding for the federal government's ecoEnergy Retrofit program. They made this decision despite the program's broad-based success. In just a five-year period, one in every 20 Canadian households applied to receive a rebate. I, in fact, was one of those households. Let me tell you, I got a home energy audit, not because anyone was twisting my arm, but because I wanted to reduce my energy footprint and ensure I was living sustainably, both financially and environmentally. That was the motivation of all Ontarians who used this program.

Unfortunately, the Liberals have chosen to ignore this fact. Instead, they think all Ontarians should be forced to conserve energy with overly expensive hydro bills, smart meters, time-of-use pricing, and a bunch of other regulatory schemes. But they haven't stopped there. Now they want to make home energy audits mandatory, first using this motion and then proclaiming section 3 of the Green Energy Act. I shouldn't have to remind the Liberals that Ontarians rejected this section four years ago. They were outraged to learn that the government was about to force them to spend hundreds of dollars on an energy audit and thousands of dollars on repairs just to sell their home. That's why section 3 was never proclaimed into law.

The member should know that prospective buyers can already request to see the utility bills for a property at no cost to the homeowner. Unlike an efficiency rating, this approach provides the best snapshot of a home's overall energy costs in real dollars and cents. But if the prospective buyer wants to know the efficiency rating, he or she can make an offer conditional on the results of an energy audit. Clearly, there's no reason at all for the Liberals to strong-arm Ontario home sellers into spending hundreds of dollars on an energy audit when simple, more effective solutions already exist within the marketplace at no cost to the home buyer or owner.

What also concerns me are the unintended consequences of this motion. In fact, more than 61% of

Ontario homes were built before 1980—just slightly after I was born—well before energy efficiency guidelines were part of the code. That means this hastily conceived motion will pave the way for forcing three million Ontario homeowners into getting a home energy audit. Many of these homeowners are seniors relying on equity in their property for their retirement. This policy change could have devastating effects on many of our seniors' retirement plans.

I would ask the member to clearly rethink this motion and encourage him to put the faith back into Ontarians, because obviously we, on this side of the House, know Ontarians do a better job of protecting our environment than useless government bureaucracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: In my riding of Kenora–Rainy River, the price of residential electricity and home heating is probably the single biggest issue that I hear when I'm knocking on doors, I'm out at trade shows, or even at my constituency offices. People are extremely concerned about being able to afford to pay their home utility bills and to have money left over to put food on the table.

While this bill may be beneficial to consumers who are looking to buy a new home, it does nothing to help those who are looking for homes or who already live in their homes and are looking to sell.

If passed, this would penalize individuals and families with modest incomes and seniors who already feel the squeeze and already feel that they don't have the money to keep paying their day-to-day living expenses, never mind being able to afford to conduct energy efficiency upgrades or audits. It's just completely unaffordable.

This government does claim to be concerned about the well-being and the independence of seniors, but it continues to spend billions of dollars on new gas plants and nuclear plants instead of coming up with a cost-effective energy efficiency strategy and by doing away with the programs that have actually served to help people and keep them in their homes. When it comes to keeping seniors in their homes longer, making independence affordable is probably the single biggest thing that this government could do. Another thing that this government could do is similar to what Manitoba currently does, which is offer no fewer than nine programs and loans to increase the energy efficiency of residential homes.

Quite simply, this motion puts the cart before the horse. It would penalize good hard-working people who are struggling to keep up. I have yet to meet a person living in Kenora–Rainy River, or, really, anywhere in Ontario, who isn't interested in energy efficiency or with lowering the price of their energy bills. But again, this bill doesn't do anything to help people get there, and that's where our focus needs to be.

But that said, Speaker, I intend to support this motion because I believe that much can be gained by having an in-depth discussion on ways that Ontario can help

homeowners to improve the energy efficiency of their homes, and for that reason, I will be voting to continue this discussion at committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today with great pleasure to support the member from Ottawa–Orléans' motion, and I want to commend the member for raising the issue of home energy audits and energy labelling again. He's very persistent on this issue, because he's raised it before. In 2008, he brought forward the home energy act, and the Green Energy Act was introduced a year later, which incorporated many of the good ideas that were contained in his private member's bill. Clearly he's committed to this cause, and I am proud to stand alongside him in supporting this effort today.

I'm also proud to stand in this House and say that our government has led the way on home energy efficiency for new home construction. I have some personal knowledge of that because my son and his fiancée are actually days away—I think they have a countdown going—from moving into their new home. Their new dream home has, under the building code's new efficiency standards for homes built since January 1, 2012, some new standards, and they've been paying attention to that.

What does it mean to the average consumer? It means that the contractor building the house will have several features that help it meet the new building code for a standard of energy. For example, home builders can choose to use insulation to keep the heat from escaping the home and reducing the amount of heat they need to use. The builder can install windows that have the same effect of keeping the heat from escaping the home and also they can use a high-efficiency furnace, which also helps reduce the home heating fuel bill for homeowners.

The new guidelines mean that a new home will be at least 40% more efficient than the home my son grew up in. But we're not stopping there. Our new home efficiency targets will mean that new homes built after 2017 onward consume 50% less energy than they did before 2006. The requirements that we've put in place and those that are coming solidify Ontario's leadership in new home energy efficiency when compared to other North American building codes. Mr. Speaker, that's going to save my son and other Ontario families money on their energy bills. That is why I'm supportive of this motion. We need to find ways to encourage all Ontarians to use energy efficiency whenever possible, particularly in existing homes.

The energy labels have the potential to incentivize energy efficiency improvements, which could transform our housing market and stimulate the demand for energy-efficient homes and the products that support that. That will result in savings to homebuyers on their home energy bills. People who have made improvements to their homes since the initial construction can be credited for their actions and their investments. Buyers can't see behind the walls, and energy labelling will provide a measure of this and make it easier for consumers to compare.

I want to commend the member from Ottawa—Orléans for his continuing advocacy on increasing consumer education and improved energy efficiency programs. I think this is something that is worthy of conversation, and I'm happy to support it going to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join this debate today on the member from Ottawa—Orléans' motion. I find it very interesting. We have to take a look at history because history is a predictor of future behaviour. I feel that we're going around the circle again. The ill-conceived Green Energy Act has just caused issue after issue.

I find it pretty interesting that if you take a look historically, the Ontario Real Estate Association convinced the Liberal government to actually not proclaim section 3 of the Green Energy Act. That could bring a whole host of discussion items to the floor today. Why did the Liberal government choose to listen to the Ontario Real Estate Association in 2009 but they choose not to listen to 70-plus unwilling host communities that are standing up against the actual invasion of industrial wind turbines in communities where they're not wanted?

1540

As I said, this discussion could go in many different directions. I want to say that I really appreciate the spirit in which the member from Ottawa—Orléans brought this motion to the floor, but sadly, we can't support it, because if you take a look at the realities, it's another tax. In Ontario, we just can't afford the manner in which the Liberal government is leading us down a path of no return. I have had numerous emails and conversations with people who are encouraging myself and the PC caucus to say no to this private member's motion. The realities are, we should not be further facilitating a nanny state. That's what we have had this last decade. It's a lost decade. People do not have the confidence in this Liberal government because they continue to hammer down and tell us exactly what we have to do and what we can't do.

To the member for Ottawa—Orléans, I'd like to suggest I totally agree in conservation. I was told once, and I thoroughly believe it, the greenest kilowatt is the kilowatt that's never used. We're talking about conservation, but people have to be trusted to choose that path. We shouldn't have to subject them to a nanny state. It's absolutely ridiculous.

I think about the additional regulations and the additional employees the Ontario government might have to hire to fulfill this private member's motion, because there is no exact science behind auditing. I'm afraid that there would be private firms choosing to interpret the regulations one way or another, causing added chaos to an environment that the Liberal government has completely failed in, in terms of energy conservation and the energy picture overall in Ontario.

I think about the people who are going to be selling their homes over the next few years. I think about my mother, who—oh, I'd better not say her age; I almost did.

I think about my mother, who could very well be selling her house in a couple of years.

I think about my grandmother, who would have been 97 this year, and her house was sold. You know what? The seniors throughout Ontario are calling constituency offices very concerned that they cannot afford their energy costs. And now these seniors are going to be faced with selling their home, but before they can do so, they have to spend thousands of dollars in upgrades.

This whole motion just further props up ill-conceived green energy notions. While I appreciate the spirit in which was suggested, it's all wrong. We need to be reducing regulation and getting our province back on the path to prosperity through focusing on the economy and jobs instead of this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It's Thursday afternoon; it's time for private members' business. Welcome, Grandma Grace, to our show this afternoon—to let her know that we're debating a motion by the member from Ottawa—Orléans around energy conservation.

I want to start by commending the member. I know that I have spoken to him personally. He is a member who cares deeply about the environment—one of the few members, unfortunately, that I've heard talk about the issue of climate change. But it is key to note, Speaker, that the member, who is the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, has had to bring this issue forward as a private member's motion rather than as a government initiative. That's unfortunate, because the issue of climate change and the issue of energy conservation is something that should take priority, and that's actually not what's happening here today. In fact, the record shows the Liberal government has dropped the ball when it comes to energy efficiency and it really refuses to pick it up.

As we all know, energy conservation is the cheapest way to meet electricity and energy demands, but as the Environment Commissioner has pointed out time and time again, this Liberal government has not done very much when it comes to conserving energy in Ontario.

Let's take a look at the Liberal government record on conservation and energy efficiency over the past few years. Back in 2009, the government defeated NDP amendments to the Green Energy Act that would have required the government to pursue all cost-effective conservation before seeking new supply. This government has ramped down energy efficiency targets over the life of its 2010 long-term energy plan. It set goals of 4,500 megawatts of conservation over the first five years, but then only 2,500 megawatts over the next 15 years. It cancelled the home energy savings program in 2011, and although the cost of saving a kilowatt of energy is less than half the cost of obtaining a new kilowatt through renewable or nuclear energy, Ontario's 2010 long-term energy plan still proposed spending six times more on electricity supply than on energy efficiency. The dollars are going in the wrong place.

Worst of all, this government has allowed OPG to proceed with over \$1 billion in spending on the refurbishment of the Darlington nuclear power plant before considering cheaper energy conservation alternatives.

The government knows that conserving energy is cheaper than building new power plants. In the summer, the Minister of Energy released a discussion paper for consultation entitled *Conservation First*, but we know the title of the paper does not reflect Liberal priorities. We've seen enough discussion papers, panels and conversations, but actions speak louder than words. And the action we see from this government is putting nuclear expansion first—putting it before conservation and before saving for the province.

There's only one way to put conservation first, and that's to reduce the Liberal government's arbitrary commitment to keeping nuclear power at 50% of the grid for decades to come. There are cheaper and better ways to do this.

It's ironic that the member is introducing this motion, given that his government cancelled the initiatives that would have helped homeowners comply with energy labelling and refused to make conservation a viable policy option in this province. A concern with this motion is the potential cost to homeowners. Potentially, this initiative could penalize modest-income seniors—my colleague has made this point already this afternoon—who don't have the funds to conduct energy efficiency upgrades or who live in older and less well-insulated homes. These homeowners would be more able to conduct these upgrades to their homes if the home energy savings program had not been cancelled by this government.

Having said that, the labelling of homes upon sale is a good step, and despite the comments by the official opposition, the government does have a role to play. It's not about the nanny state; it's about the function of government and what we do together to encourage better public policy. As it is, homeowners are often hesitant to invest in energy efficiency improvements because the payback on investment often exceeds the time they think they will be in their home.

Energy labelling provides an incentive for homeowners to make energy efficiency improvements, because their investments are more likely to be recouped when they sell their homes. For example, a comprehensive study in California found that energy-efficient-labelled homes typically sold for nearly 9% more, relative to non-labelled homes. Labelling will also provide more transparency about the condition of a house for homebuyers, obviously, and encouraging these audits will create green jobs across this province.

Because of the potential benefits of energy labelling, I will support this motion, but let's be clear: The benefits are small considering the way this is coming forward. We know where the real action needs to happen. If this government were serious about conservation, it would take the steps I talked about earlier and get serious about conserving energy. It would set more aggressive energy

efficiency targets, it would re-examine its obsession with nuclear power, it would stop its expensive privatization schemes and it would find ways to help people pay for home energy audits and retrofits.

I want to leave some time for my colleague to say some words. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. It gives me an opportunity to pay tribute to a colleague of mine, the member from Ottawa—Orléans, certainly in our caucus and in this House a gentleman who reminds us quite often, on a regular basis, of what impact we have on the environment. Sometimes, when we seem to ignore some of the warnings that are staring us in the face about what's happening out there in global warming and climate change, it's Mr. McNeely who often brings us back on track and gets us talking about something we should be talking a lot more about.

When you look at it from a very practical perspective, what the motion is saying is that when consumers are making what is probably going to be the biggest purchase of their entire life, we could do better, as a government and as a society, at warning people, telling people what the operating costs of that big purchase are going to be in the future. More often, when I think of that, when I develop an image of whom this motion might help, I think of a young family that's out shopping for their first home. They're either in Toronto looking at a condo or they're out in Oakville looking at a subdivision. They see a house they like, and they think they can afford that house. What they don't often think of in the excitement of the new purchase, raising a family, the move and everything else, is that there's going to be ongoing operating costs associated with that home.

1550

It would seem to me that, if you were interested in adding a layer of protection to the interests of the young homebuyers in the province of Ontario, you would simply put on a label, a tag, a standard or an index quite similar to what we do with refrigerators, what we do with stereos, what we do with ovens and what we do with automobiles, for example. When you buy a car, you look at the mileage, and it's the law that the manufacturer of the automobile has to tell you what the mileage is so that when you buy that car, you know that the expense to operate that car is going to be X dollars per mile. It seems to me that we could apply that same standard to people who are buying homes. We could tell people up front what the anticipated operating costs of the biggest purchase in their life are.

People who have lined up to support this initiative from the member from Ottawa—Orléans include Bill Johnston—he's a broker, manager and legal counsel of Bosley Real Estate, and he's the former president of TREB and an OREA board member—and organizations such as Building Knowledge Canada; the Canadian Energy Efficiency Alliance; the Clean Air Partnership; Evolution Green; Green Communities Canada; Green-

Saver; the Ontario Home Builders' Association; Peter Love, somebody we all know, who is an associate professor at York University; and the Toronto Atmospheric Fund. That seems to me to be a very comprehensive group of organizations that have, I think, an awful lot of expertise and a lot of knowledge that they'd like to share with other people. What they're saying by lending their support to notice of motion number 44, which is before us today from the member from Ottawa-Orléans, is that this would be a good idea.

We just had a report issued by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario; it's called Building Momentum. On page 29 of that report, it outlines the annual per capita residential greenhouse gas emissions for the GTA. There are some areas that look pretty green, that look like they're doing a pretty good job. There are a lot of areas, however, that are in the red. That's primarily as a result of either transportation, residential electricity use or building fuel. So that's what's contributing to the degradation of air quality in the GTA. I think the initiative that has come forward from the member for Ottawa-Orléans goes a long way towards being able to help to mitigate it. But at the same time, it's a very practical bill that allows for consumer protection when those consumers in our society are making, as I said, what is probably the biggest purchase of their life.

I think the member from Ottawa-Orléans should be commended for continuing to bring this type of information forward, and I would ask all members of the House to support him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I rise to take a stand for homeowners and tenants in this province who see their incomes and pensions chiselled away by this current government. Climbing hydro bills, set to rise another 50%, according to the Auditor General, have made independent living almost or completely unaffordable for many of my constituents.

Smart meters, a measure touted as a cost saver, have instead resulted in an extra, never-before-announced charge being tacked on Ontarians' bills. Time-of-use billing has imposed a government-approved schedule on our daily activities. People on a fixed income, especially seniors, can no longer make ends meet, and they are forced to choose between putting food on their table or heating their homes—truly, a sad state of affairs.

I have some news for the government side: No matter how much or how strongly they wish for a utopian energy dream to come true, it takes sound policy, not wishful thinking and government force, to make good things happen. Energy audits, as envisioned in this motion, are just an arbitrary measure of a home's energy efficiency. The rating will never tell a prospective buyer how their energy consumption habits will affect the bills when they move in.

There is a reliable, simple and free answer to the problem. Prospective homebuyers can simply review the utility bills of their future property, which will provide a

clear picture of the energy consumption patterns in both winter and summer.

This motion also displays a very flawed approach that this government has taken towards the jobs file as a whole. We've heard that mandatory audits will supposedly make work for energy auditors. This isn't jobs, or concern for the environment, or even sanity. It's just more government jobs driving up costs to the consumer.

If the answer was as simple as what the government has been practising for the past 10 years, creating thousands—even hundreds of thousands—of more government jobs, then tax Ontarians to pay for them, then the jobs crisis would have been solved and we wouldn't have 600,000 Ontarians looking for a job today.

Speaker, you cannot create wealth by robbing Peter to pay Paul. This motion would just create a cost from which the government would skim 13% HST. Ontarians are already being taxed, nickelled and dimed at every moment. They would tell the member from Ottawa-Orléans, "No, thank you."

If the government truly cared about energy conservation and protecting the environment, they would make it easy for innovators to set up shop in Ontario and supply new, energy-efficient materials to our market at great prices.

This Liberal government has talked energy but has only delivered costs and misery. If you really want to cut the costs for our suffering homeowners, I would suggest you might harvest some of the hot air from the other side and use it to heat our homes.

More rules, regulations and costs may be the only politics this government understands, but it has only served to drive up costs to a point where businesses can't compete and our consumers can't afford the prosperous life that they've worked so hard for and that we used to be used to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to get up. First of all, right off the bat, I'm going to say we're supporting this bill. Now I'm going to tell you what the problems are.

I refer to the member from Davenport, who is our environment critic, who did a wonderful job of outlining every single thing this government has done that, of course, completely contradicts their claim to be environmentally friendly.

But I want to highlight two of those reasons: One, and I think this is particularly damning, is cancelling the home energy savings program in 2011; two, and this is critical—\$1 billion is going into nuclear energy. That's \$1 billion that could have been spent doing what? Setting up the kind of fund, for example, that Manitoba has, where you can borrow money to retrofit your house and get energy audits, and then pay it back out of your energy savings. Imagine if we had that in Ontario. And guess what would happen if we did? That fund becomes self-seeding and eventually pays for itself. So it doesn't even cost tax dollars; it's just an initial investment. They could

do that; they're not doing that. In fact, they're running fast in the opposite direction.

The other thing I wanted to highlight is that this is a government that actually paid other jurisdictions to take our excess in power—paid them. Now they sell it to them at a deep discount.

How dare they talk about energy conservation and the environment? It's unbelievable. I'm talking about our environment minister, really—but, I mean, I'm talking about the reports that come out on a regular basis that are all incredibly critical from our commissioners on this government's history with the environment. There is a term for this kind of action. It's called "greenwashing." It's called, "Doing all the wrong things but introducing a bill that makes it sound like you're actually progressive."

One of the things I wanted to do, standing on my hind legs here, is to give a shout-out, by the way, to those folk, many of whom from my riding are fasting right now on Parliament Hill. They're fasting because of the lack of action of successive administrations, federally, on climate change.

To bring it on home here to Ontario, one can say the same thing here. We are in a crisis situation where the environment is concerned and where energy is concerned. Our eminent critics—our critic for energy, who used to be the executive director of Greenpeace; that says it all right there, and our environment critic from Davenport—have outlined this on numerous occasions. Then we get—not even a government bill here, by the way—a private member's bill that, chances are—

Interjection: A motion.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A motion, yes—not even a bill. It's a motion—it's a motion; it's not even a bill—that makes it sound as if they're doing something. If you're watching this, if you're here in the chamber, I'm sure your intentions are good. I'm sure you hope their intentions are good. My stand here today is to say that they're not. They are not.

1600

This is not going to go anywhere. Mark my words: It's not going to go anywhere. It's not going to make any changes whatsoever in the lives of anybody. In fact, it provides a cover for what is not being done. That's the most egregious aspect of it. That's why "greenwashing" is a good term, and that's what's going on here this afternoon.

I think I've said it all. If you want to look at a jurisdiction that's doing it right, look to Manitoba with a lot less resources doing a whole lot more. Certainly, where you should not look is to the Liberal government in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to speak today in favour of motion 44, introduced by my colleague the member for Ottawa—Orléans. This motion seeks to make disclosure of home energy ratings mandatory at the point of purchase. This is a good bill that will protect consumers, promote energy efficiency and create green jobs.

This bill was introduced in 2008 and gained all-party support. It was adopted into the Green Energy Act, and while it exists in spirit, it is not regulated.

I know in my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood that most of the homes were built prior to 2009. Not only that, but a lot of the homes, especially those south of Kingston Road, are older homes. The second person I spoke to on the first day of my election campaign was a new homeowner. We were able to talk about how beautiful the homes are in Scarborough—Guildwood and how the lower mortgage rates are attractive to young families who still want to live in the city of Toronto.

As young families move into my riding and make the most important financial commitment of their lives, it is important for them to be completely informed when they make this major purchase. Joe Vaccaro, president of the Ontario Home Builders' Association, who is here in the gallery today in support of the bill, has stated, "OHBA has been consistent in our support for the energy labelling of resale homes since the introduction of the Green Energy Act, as we see it as an extension of important and necessary consumer disclosure."

This bill has many benefits, but this one is really the most obvious. Families, especially young families, deserve for this disclosure to be made mandatory. This is a basic issue of informing and protecting consumers, something that's vitally important to my constituents in Scarborough—Guildwood and across Ontario.

Why should consumers not have the right to know everything about the biggest financial investment that they will ever make, buying a home? Bill Johnson, the Canadian Real Estate Association director at large, former president of the Toronto Real Estate Board and an Ontario Real Estate Association board member, has stated that he is "a big supporter of energy audits and energy labelling for real estate. Energy costs are a major expense for homeowners.... Consumers deserve to be better acquainted with these costs, along with the various ways to make their homes more energy efficient."

OREA claims that this bill will punish people who are trying to sell homes built before 2009, homes that have not been retrofitted to comply with energy standards. Energy costs are a huge part of the expenses that come with home ownership. Buyers have a right to know if the home that they are buying will cost them more in the long run.

The bill does not in fact punish anyone. It will, however, reward 10% of homeowners who have retrofitted or who purchased a home built after 2009. This bill is a tool that will simply allow homebuyers to be more prepared to make their purchase.

Gord Miller, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario stated in his report in 2011, "The public interest is not being served by" government's "inaction on mandatory home energy audits." The interests of homeowners are "harm'd by the lack of transparency related to energy use in the home."

This bill would regulate a piece of information that should be, but is not, voluntarily provided to every

person in Ontario who is in the market for a home. OREA tries to claim that mandatory energy audits would be detrimental to Ontario's economy and that, faced with the recommended energy improvements—however, homeowners make material upgrades to their homes over the course of home ownership. Realtors across the province sell various aspects of that home, but none of them talk about the substantial benefits of energy conservation upgrades. The long-term cost savings, as well as the minimized environmental impact, are huge benefits that buyers need to be aware of.

In a 2009 EnerQuality survey, nine out of 10 homebuyers believed that home energy efficiency is an important consideration when purchasing a home. Motion 44 will also encourage energy conservation, a very important aspect of this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I know that a lot of members are coming back in because it's close to the vote, but there are about 15 conversations going on in the chamber and it's very difficult to hear the speaker. I would ask for a little quiet.

The member for Ottawa—Orléans, you have two minutes.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members from Kitchener—Conestoga and Kenora—Rainy River, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the members for Huron—Bruce, Davenport, Oakville, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Parkdale—High Park and Scarborough—Guildwood.

I'm very pleased to hear all these positive comments from the party opposite. I'm sure it would probably be good for them to read what the Environmental Commissioner has said. He's a very important person in this province, and he has consistently pushed to get this information out at the time of sale of homes to create employment, not for the inspectors but for the retrofits that would follow.

Disclosing the most information possible will invigorate the market and create jobs. Gord Cooke of Building Knowledge Canada says, "Energy efficiency labelling is a high-value, knowledge-based industry that in and by itself encourages great jobs and then spurs some of the most cost-effective and sustainable housing renovation work available."

I'm sure you know that every energy-based retrofit project offers the highest rate of investment return possible. This is a better rate of return than virtually any other investment the consumer can make.

I encourage the PC caucus to try to remember a few years back, when the member for Durham, commenting on my private member's bill, said:

"I support the whole idea of conservation culture.... The kilowatt that you don't consume is the kilowatt you don't have to generate. So" Phil McNeely is "on the right track."

"We have decided as a caucus to support Mr. McNeely's bill."

"The point I want to make is this: First of all, this was one of the planks in our platform in 2007"—that was the Tory government. "It was in our platform. Therefore, must be a good decision."

I thank all the members for commenting. I think this is an important discussion to have, and I think we should listen to the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario and get this done. Thank you for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for private members' public business has expired.

ARCHIVES AND RECORDKEEPING AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES ARCHIVES PUBLIQUES ET LA CONSERVATION DES DOCUMENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr. Tabuns.

Mr. Tabuns has moved second reading of Bill 102, An Act to amend the Archives and Recordkeeping Act, 2006 to impose penalties for offences relating to public record of archival value.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I request that the bill be sent to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ELECTION ADVERTISING TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE DES GROUPE D'INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Nicholls has moved second reading of Bill 101, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third-party election advertising.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will take this vote at the end of regular business.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. McNeely has moved private member's notice of motion number 44.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will take the vote shortly.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1610 to 1615.

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS ELECTION ADVERTISING TRANSPARENCY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DE LA PUBLICITÉ ÉLECTORALE DES GROUPES D'INTÉRÊT PARTICULIER

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would members please take their seats.

Mr. Nicholls has moved second reading of Bill 101, An Act to amend the Election Finances Act with respect to third party election advertising.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia

Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Fife, Catherine

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Hatfield, Percy
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Mori, Reza
Murray, Glen R.

Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 34; the nays are 47.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Open the doors for a second, please—30 seconds.

ENERGY CONSERVATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. McNeely has moved private member's notice of motion number 44. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Campbell, Sarah
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Fife, Catherine

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Hatfield, Percy
Hunter, Mitzie
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Mori, Reza
Murray, Glen R.

Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Qaadri, Shafiq
Sandals, Liz
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Clark, Steve
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.
Jackson, Rod
Jones, Sylvia

Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
O'Toole, John

Ouellette, Jerry J.
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 47; the nays are 34.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 1, 2013, on the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to the order of the House carried earlier today, I'm now required to put the question.

On September 26, Mr. Milloy moved government notice of motion number 22, a motion to apply a timetable to the consideration of certain business of the House.

On September 30, Mr. Bisson then moved that the motion be amended as follows: That the references relating to Bill 74 in government order number 8 be deleted.

We will deal first with Mr. Bisson's amendment.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the amendment carry?

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1624 to 1629.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	Schein, Jonah
Bisson, Gilles	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Natyshak, Taras	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	Prue, Michael	
Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonnell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Holyday, Douglas C.	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 19; the nays are 33.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the amendment lost.

We will now deal with the main motion. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion by Mr. Milloy to apply a timetable to the consideration of certain business of the House carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1632 to 1637.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Harris, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Holyday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Hunter, Mitzie	Murray, Glen R.
Barrett, Toby	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Jaczek, Helena	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Jeffrey, Linda	Pettapiece, Randy
Chan, Michael	Jones, Sylvia	Piruzza, Teresa
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq

Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte
Colle, Mike	Leone, Rob
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy
Damerla, Dipika	MacLaren, Jack
Del Duca, Steven	MacLeod, Lisa
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit
Dhillon, Vic	McDonnell, Jim
Dickson, Joe	McKenna, Jane
Duguid, Brad	McMeekin, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield	McNaughton, Monte
Elliott, Christine	McNeely, Phil
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Norm
Fraser, John	Milligan, Rob E.
Hardeman, Ernie	Milloy, John

Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Sousa, Charles
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Horwath, Andrea	Schein, Jonah
Bisson, Gilles	Mantha, Michael	Singh, Jagmeet
Campbell, Sarah	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	Natyshak, Taras	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	Prue, Michael	
Hatfield, Percy	Sattler, Peggy	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 64; the nays are 19.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

VISITORS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Point of order, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my privilege and honour to introduce some of the people who joined us for this historic vote this afternoon: James St. John, the business manager for the Central Ontario Building Trades; Terry Snooks, business manager, United Association of plumbers and steamfitters Local 46 and president of the Central Ontario Building Trades; Steve Martin, business manager, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 353; Jack Barbossa, business manager, Marble, Tile and Terrazzo Local 31; Greg Mitchell, business manager, United Association of sprinkler fitters Local 853.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 6, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes
St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Parkdale–High Park, further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Sorry, Mr. Speaker. There was just too much excitement there, and I was carried away with the moment.

I'm going to be speaking, of course, about the Great Lakes Protection Act, but truly we have just lived through a very interesting vote, a vote in which, I have to say, the only leader who showed up was our leader, Andrea Horwath. I think that says a lot, in and of itself, no matter how you vote on anything, that on such an important matter that deals with collective bargaining—the very essence of a democratic right in this province—only one leader shows up.

But back to the Great Lakes, because this is another example, of course, of a Liberal greenwashing bill. I'll get into that in a moment.

Before we get into the greenwashing bill, I also want to say that it's an amazing historic moment, too, when one single company, EllisDon, gets their way and literally gets a bill passed—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to stick to what is in front of us.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I certainly will, Mr. Speaker. But here is a direct route, and then sometimes there is a scenic route.

What is the Great Lakes Protection Act? I actually spoke about this in my Google Hangout today. By the way, for anybody watching, I certainly recommend that you tune in every Friday between 12 and 12:30 to my Google Hangout; it's on YouTube. I spoke about the Great Lakes Protection Act; I said it is an example of a Liberal environmental bill that sounds wonderful. It sounds wonderful because we need to protect the Great Lakes. I think we're all agreed on that in this House. There's absolutely no question about that. They are under huge threat. Ten years into their mandate here, the government is bringing this bill in.

What does this bill do? In essence, what this bill does is set up a committee. It gives it some marching orders, but it doesn't mandate any action. That, to me, is the essence of why I would call it a greenwashing bill. Again, right up front, we're going to vote for this bill—there's no question about that—because it's better than doing nothing. If I had a dollar for every time we have stood in this House and said a Liberal environmental or energy bill is better than doing nothing, I would be a very wealthy woman. So it's better than doing nothing. It sets up a committee to study the problem and maybe do something. That's what this bill does.

What might it have done? What could it do? Certainly, we'll be very anxious to add things in at committee, I'm sure.

For example, the question is, will the bill lead to a change in the Ontario government's policy to continue to allow Ontario's nuclear power stations to use outdated

“once-through” cooling systems, which allow the plants to suck in and spew out hundreds of millions of litres of water a day, killing hundreds of millions of fish each year? Now, there's a simple thing, a simple thing that could be remedied. There are simple technologies to remedy this problem. Had the government even done that, it would have had more strength and more efficacy in cleaning up the Great Lakes than this entire bill.

It's also not clear that it will change the government's policy to allow Bruce Power to ship radioactive steam generators from its nuclear stations across the Great Lakes, a plan opposed by First Nations and hundreds of thousands of Ontarians. Our energy critic and environmental critic have spoken out about that.

Finally, it's unclear whether the bill will ensure that the government will require a full environmental assessment before allowing the shipment of tar sands bitumen across the Great Lakes basin, a plan which puts the Great Lakes at risk of a spill—not hypothetically, but one like the one that happened in Michigan in 2010, which cost over a billion dollars to clean up.

So, “Why not?” one might ask. Here is a bill that is purporting to protect the Great Lakes, sets up a committee, but takes none of the obvious steps to actually accomplish that fact. Again, one can only wonder why, considering that this government was so incredibly effective at very quickly running through the EllisDon bill. Here we have a bill that has taken 10 years to get to the floor, that accomplishes very little by way of a committee, and yet the EllisDon bill went through here incredibly quickly. This government is one that loves to have conversations about issues and loves to set up committees to study issues. Here they are setting up a committee to study the Great Lakes issues. They never suggested a conversation about the EllisDon bill, never set up a committee to study the EllisDon situation or predicament, but very quickly acted.

So here's the problem: Again, what we've called for is specified targets—actually something in writing, actually something that would make a difference in the state and the health of our lakes. It allows the setting up of measurable targets—I love the language here; it's real wiggly language—but it should actually require targets. So it allows them. Imagine if it disallowed targets; that would be the final nail in the coffin of any kind of sense of this bill. It allows it, so it's conceivable that this committee could set targets to clean up the Great Lakes. What? Am I the only person who finds this bizarre, that that's the strength of this act, that this committee has a chance to—maybe, might, over lunch one day—set up targets, but isn't required to? In what possible world does this count as actual action on the environment file?

There is a very good reason why Gord Miller, our Environmental Commissioner, sends in, year after year since I've been here, pretty scathing reports about this government's lack in fulfilling its own mandates. Maybe that's why his budget was cut, which again is an action, unlike this bill. There's actual action when you cut the commissioner's budget to do his job, but yet bring in a

bill that, "Well, if they really want to set targets, we're not going to stop them from setting targets, but we're not going to require them to set targets." In other words, "Yeah, we're going to set you up to study the problem, and you can clean up the lakes. You can actually do something if you really want to, but you don't have to do anything if you don't really want to."

1650

It would be interesting to see the budget attached to this. I'm sure there's not much of one. That also, of course, is part of the problem, because unless you put money behind something—we know how things work in this place: If there's not money behind things, they just don't seem to get done. Actually, in this place, even if you put a lot of money behind something, it doesn't seem to get done; except, of course, if you're EllisDon, in which case you get a lot done by putting a lot of money behind something. We saw that in action here with a historic vote that just took place, a vote where Liberals and Tories came together—not unheard of; actually quite frequent. If you look at the donors' list, you will see that there are a lot of similar donors to both parties, and perhaps that's why. Perhaps the piper really does call the tune. Who knew?

On this one, however, we've got a number of groups who would like to see targets. Let's mention them very quickly: Environmental Defence, Ducks Unlimited, Sierra Club, Great Lakes United, the Canadian Environmental Law Association and Ecojustice. They want to see targets, but targets there are not, Mr. Speaker: another greenwashing attempt on behalf of the Liberal government, which can be incredibly effective, and was on EllisDon, but not on the environment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've heard a speech which is much less positive than the critic for the New Democratic Party, who I think recognized the significance of this bill and was extolling its virtues and also pointing out where he would like to see changes to the bill. I think that was appropriate.

I am always amused now with the New Democratic Party's holier-than-thou stance on environmental issues, because when I speak to the environmental community, and I know my friend the member for Danforth recognizes—it's not his fault, because he is a leading environmentalist, but they're saying now that the NDP has taken a significant right turn on environmental issues to portray itself now as a populist party, going after populist causes, as opposed to the pretty fundamental environmental causes. So I wish him well—along with the critic, the member for Davenport—in persuading the rest of the caucus to get back on the environmental agenda. I know he's raised some questions from time to time.

This bill, when it was introduced—people knew what was in the bill because there was a lot of consultation that took place—was widely hailed as a very positive step in the right direction. It adds to the legislation which is already in place, which is significant legislation, much of

it brought in by previous Liberal governments and one Liberal government, but also by other—particularly, I think the New Democratic Party probably brought some legislation in this regard as well.

So I think it's positive moving forward. I would like to see this bill move quickly to committee. I think the member for Parkdale—High Park has justifiably said so much significant work can be done in committee on a bill of this kind, to make any changes that members of the assembly deem to be appropriate.

The last thing I would say is—no, I won't say that I'm going to leave out the reference to the leader's gala.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an interesting afternoon here. The member from Parkdale—High Park spoke, as the minister has just said, in kind of a confusing way because, quite honestly, they talk a lot about the environment, and you have to look at the actions that follow up on that. Even today, we were talking earlier this morning on I think it's Bill 91, and that bill was dealing with waste diversion. They're talking about things that in fact weren't even in the bill, that bill itself. Their critic was saying things that weren't appropriate to the bill itself and I think the same thing here.

If you look at the motherhood part of this Bill 6, which was formerly Bill 100, it's interesting because there are a lot of parties at the table when it comes to the Great Lakes. It borders on other provinces and other jurisdictions internationally. There's a joint commission, as I understand it, on the Great Lakes, which has representatives from the province as well as the federal government, as well as the state governments that border on the lakes, as well as the federal government there. So this is one more intrusion. It sounds good. I will be speaking in a few minutes on the bill, but I commend the member from Parkdale—High Park. I enjoy her remarks. I listened carefully. Unfortunately, her remarks were interrupted the last time you had a chance to speak on that, so you really didn't have your full time today. Maybe in your two minutes, you'll give a clue whether or not you're supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member—member—for Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. It's been a long day; I can tell.

First, I want to address one of the remarks made by my colleague from Parkdale—High Park, and that's that indeed, it's been a historic day here in the Legislature. A coalition of Conservatives and Liberals coming together united around the defence of EllisDon, is noteworthy. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've given the same advice to your colleague and I'll give the same to you: I'd like you to speak to the bill that's in front of us in terms of questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I thank you for your guidance and advice, Speaker, but it was very necessary to comment on

this historic event; and if I may be permitted to continue, then the other part that was very important in what the member from Parkdale–High Park had to say was that there is a shortfall in this bill in that the minister is not required to set targets for remediation of the Great Lakes.

Beyond that, because this government has not paid attention to other major, significant environmental impacts on the lakes—and I'm talking most profoundly about action on climate change—the lakes are threatened in a way that this bill in no way addresses.

Most recently the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario in his report, *Failing Our Future*, looked at the fact that this government is failing to meet even its own targets for taking on climate change. That has a huge impact on the Great Lakes.

As you may well be aware, Speaker, the city of Toronto did a study on the impact of climate change in the Toronto area. In the next 25 years, the summer temperatures we enjoy in July will be the temperatures we have from May to the end of October. There will be a huge amount of evaporation and a great reduction in the lakes that we depend on.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm pleased to comment on this act. My riding of Scarborough–Guildwood borders on the Great Lake of Lake Ontario, and many of the residents in my riding are involved in activities to preserve the ecological nature of our communities. I know that this issue is very important to them, both now and for the future.

The importance of our Great Lakes really cannot be understated. It is about our drinking water, our quality of life and our prosperity in living in this beautiful—it's just a continuous national park system, really, when you take a broad view of it. We need to restore them and we need to continue to enjoy those benefits for future generations.

What concerns me and many people in my community is that scientists are telling us that three of the four Great Lakes are in decline, and that should be really alarming to all of us here. The proposed act is really setting out a pathway to protecting and restoring the ecological health of our Great Lakes system and creating opportunities for individuals and communities to become involved in their protection and the restoration of the ecological health of our lakes.

I'm very pleased to see that the Great Lakes Guardians' Council will involve a broad spectrum of communities, including aboriginal, business, agricultural, environmental, as well as municipal representatives that definitely have a direct stake in their health. It will be focused on discussing what the priorities and potential measures are that need to be put in place. That's another benefit that I see as well: the comprehensive nature of this act.

I'm very glad it was put forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes.

1700

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, thank you to everyone who did weigh in on this. Thanks to the minister himself for weighing in on this. I think he knows better than anyone that the Environmental Commissioner himself has specified specific actions that are needed, so we don't need a committee to develop targets. What we need is action, and action now. Those targets are clearly laid out by the Environmental Commissioner already. I don't have time to read them fully. I could send a page over with them to the minister, but I'm sure he knows what the Environmental Commissioner has called for. The question is, why is the Liberal government not acting on this? This is a pressing problem, and you've heard from our energy critic on this issue.

Just to quote, again, our energy critic, it's very clear that the government can act, and quite dramatically, when it wants to. That's why I contrast their lack of action on environment and energy files, their lack of action actually on the poverty file, their lack of action on the housing file—and I could go on—with the dramatic action for one company, EllisDon. I'm contrasting their lack of action on this file with the dramatic and swift action to address the problems of a company that happens to be a big donor over and against the bargaining rights of its workers. So clearly the government can act, but won't act, on the environmental file.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm privileged to have the opportunity this afternoon to speak on Bill 6, and I'm not sure, but I think I may have spoken on Bill 100 when it was on. Before prorogation, they had a bill, Bill 100, and that was on June 6, 2012.

I didn't have enough time to prepare properly here, as I had a few minutes' notice that I was going to be doing this. I want to say at the outset, though, that I would be supportive of ensuring that we have safe, clean, accessible drinking water in Ontario.

Certainly my riding has—probably one of the largest boundaries along Lake Ontario is in Durham region, and it's important. It's very important, not only for industry, which is controversial, with St. Marys Cement right next door to it, right on the shoreline there. They have a great dock there, shipping cement to the United States, actually. We have a lot of development. In fact, an ethanol plant is very close by, and we have the two nuclear plants at Darlington and Pickering, all of which require water for cooling and other activities in the plants. So I'm very concerned.

Section 22 of the bill allows the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who I see is here today, as well as the Minister of the Environment—that section is a bit confusing, because it's the Ministry of the Environment's bill, but the Ministry of Municipal Affairs can overrule official plans, in fact, under section 22, which is quite interesting. Some of those activities under section 26—section 26 deals with all the regulations in the bill, and it's a very heavily regulated bill, which means we don't really know the

powers and the fines and the enforcements and who does all these various activities. It will all show up in the regulations part of the bill. So it's a very, very large section of the bill, the section dealing with the delegated authorities, if you will, one of which is going to be this new council. I think it's the Great Lakes Guardian's Council.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it depends. It depends on what I'll be doing a few years from now.

But my sense, too, is that if you look at the bill, it's important. Bill 6 has 27 pages and eight sections, the eight sections dealing with a lot of intentions.

Now, when I look back on some of the remarks I made, I would expect that this thing would definitely go for more thorough examination somewhere down the road, but there is a lot of red tape in the bill. In fact, there are a lot of authorities now. The conservation authorities now have power on shoreline activities, and certainly in my area there are many of the Oak Ridges moraine streams, creeks, that all flow into Lake Ontario, and those are heavily regulated setbacks, making sure they're clean—that's the conservation authority—even to the shoreline.

We have a Great Lakes shoreline committee, actually, dealing with Darlington Provincial Park on Lake Ontario.

When you start intruding in these things, I start to wonder why the government—when, in fact, today there is so much oversight. There's the international Great Lakes commission; it isn't all Ontario's jurisdictional authority. They're certainly on that committee, and they certainly should have authorities within that co-operative framework with Michigan, Illinois and New York; perhaps even Washington is involved. I've been to a couple of those joint commission things in Chicago, so I have appreciated that opportunity as well.

Creating a "geographically-focused initiative"—must consult with the minister and receive cabinet approval at the proposal stage at its finalization—now, who's going to make those authorities, when it's governing and affecting the lake? It's certainly a federal jurisdictional area, for sure. We should have rules. Now, if that rule is going to affect development on the Great Lakes, that is going to affect every municipality that has frontage.

We are all concerned about water levels in our lake systems, especially the lakes in the Georgian Bay area; there are water level issues, and certainly from time to time there are water level issues on Lake Ontario, which affects tourism. It affects a whole range of activities.

When we are bringing in a bill like this, I think it has got to be clear to the people of Ontario what the expectation is. It's my understanding that there are six priorities, and the strategy is community involvement, which I think is appropriate. I hope the municipalities are going to get some of the benefits of this.

Water remediation, I believe, is a laudable objective, but we have the Clean Water Act now, so there are a lot of regulations around water—certainly its testing and all of the regime around that. I would say that the other thing

is the protection and restoration of wetlands. These are the lungs of the Great Lakes system. In fact, the wetlands tend to be the outflow of the streams, whether it's Farewell Creek, Bowmanville Creek or the other creeks that work their way down from the Oak Ridge moraine into the Great Lakes. There's a lot of work right now that goes on when it talks about the restoration of wetlands and beaches.

Improving biodiversity is quite good. Climate change adaptation—now, that maybe has to do with the water level issues. It's my understanding that if we have global warming, water levels are going to be higher, because the ice is going to melt. The ice is going to turn into more volume of water, so the water levels should go up. The way that, with global warming, most of the islands that we know today will be underwater, so that's something we should all be paying close—economic development and water technology innovations.

Economic development is certainly one of the areas where I look at the waterfront and access to the waterfront. We generally would say that the waterfront, over the past number of decades, was always industrial, which is shameful; but now in Toronto, it's almost all condos. So I think you need to have access to our public waterway system as well. As a former sailor, Lake Ontario is probably one of the best sailing lakes. It's a large body of water, and it's an important recreational activity.

I'm going to sort of stick to some of the more technical parts of it here, the sections that I like; I'm still looking for them here, actually. Today, there is going to be a third regulator on Ontario shorelines. As I said, it's the conservation act that gives the Ministry of Natural Resources the power to regulate shoreline watershed management today.

The Planning Act itself, today, gives municipalities the authority to prohibit development on shorelines, and certainly to regulate it. Now that the Ministry of the Environment wants in on the action, along with the power to collect fees from violations—that's another interesting part. A lot of the time, what they're saying is with uploading and downloading responsibility—I know Mr. Speaker, that you served, probably, on conservation authorities when you were a Metro councillor, I'm sure. There has been quite a heavy load placed on municipalities through regulation, and no funding to go with it. That's really, at the end of the day, the problem.

1710

I'm going to try to find the section that sets that out here. I think it's section 26 again. Section 26 is the regulations section:

I think it's 26 again. Section 26 is the regulations section.

"The Lieutenant Governor ... may make regulations ... regulating or prohibiting activities"—we get that—"requiring persons to do things ... designating a ... body," which is the Great Lakes Guardians' Council—"authorizing an officer appointed under clause (c) to issue orders." Those are fines, and then there's another body to designate and collect fees and another body to

etermine through regulation what the fees will be. But there's no amount for sharing it with the lower tier that is going to have to enforce all this stuff at the local level. I certainly am concerned about that, in terms of the lower-tier municipalities ending up with a lot more work and no money to do it with. That's a significant problem.

We can't even get, across the province, full cost recovery on water bills—a controversial issue—and that's the law today. All municipal levels are supposed to have full cost recovery on water bills and the infrastructure that makes that happen.

There are a number of sections in the bill that, when I look through in very short order—I wish I had a little bit more time to prepare.

Here's the issue: Having a provincial board setting priorities for a binational issue would only confuse the work that's currently being done. Between the US and Canada, we already have the International Joint Commission, as I said, the Great Lakes Water Quality Board, the Great Lakes Executive Committee and the management committee of the Canada-Ontario Agreement, the COA, all of which work to implement the priorities outlined in the US-Canada Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement. This is what exists today, and I sometimes wonder how much duplication we need. How many more select groups all getting per diems to meet in various places—Chicago, etc.? How many more do we need? We need to work with, not against, our partners to coordinate protection and remediation efforts for the Great Lakes by using the forums already in place.

Here we have a classic example, like Bill 91, Waste Diversion Ontario, the DWO, being reformatting into another group, and all that infrastructure will probably get severed and be doing the same job virtually the next day. So there's another level of bureaucracy. I see the government doing that in almost every single thing.

I am going to relate this, with your indulgence. Today, there was a good article in the paper: "Dialogue Needed on Soaring Debt." What this bill does is really indicate some more regulation, some more red tape, some more court orders, more court action, and I just outlined about six different bodies already involved in the Great Lakes. We're going to create a new one—this great guardian council, they call it—and they will all get offices and incomes, or at least pay. Here's what this article is saying—it puts things in perspective:

"It's an opportunity for Americans"—we see what's happening in the United States. They've got so much regulation, they're tied up, they're all on strike down here, basically. They're all shut down because there's not enough money, basically. It says:

"That chat will centre on their \$16.7-trillion debt. Their debt-to-GDP ratio is increasing.

"Canadians need that opportunity too.... to talk about the debt, deficits, unfunded pension liabilities and more."

So keep in perspective the ability to pay and maintain what I would call whether or not this is sustainable, before we start adding more bureaucracy. Setting aside that this is important—water quality; I get it. But put in

place here that there are all these other committees—the joint committees with the US and the federal government that are in place—I think we can work together by getting these organizations to embrace the six areas of interest that I've outlined, the six priorities, the six strategies, and the problem's solved.

At the same time, community involvement exists. Let's validate it and strengthen the role of the conservation authorities and others. I would say, in the brief time I have here—this is the problem; I should probably have an hour here. Ontario is imposing, more recently—this is part of this, Mr. Speaker, and you'd get it. Recently, former Premier McGuinty said he was going to upload all of these social costs, and some of the costs for ambulance were going to be completely paid for, and welfare costs were going to be uploaded. But at the other time, they're actually taking back the other transfer payment called OMPF, the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund. So they're not uploading a thing; they really aren't. They're taking the revenue from the lower-tier municipalities, and that's what is so damaging here, in my view.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, exactly. The OMPF money is being clawed back, so they're really not giving the municipalities any tax room—

Interjection: We don't have any money.

Mr. John O'Toole: —and there's no money left.

This article goes on: "But it also goes for provinces—health and education are big-ticket items that are becoming unwieldy. Provincial and federal net debt combined is \$1.2 trillion."

Now, if you put things in even more perspective, we are in a climate now with very, very low interest rates. What's keeping the economy going is low interest. Low interest encourages the housing market, the car market, and that low-interest debt is putting way too much money out there—in fact, way too much consumer debt out there, if you will—and that's going to crowd out—all levels of government are going to be unable to sustain the levels of service. We also see, involved in all of that, is the huge, absolutely tragic debt load on pensions. It's sinking the ship in its total thing.

So how this relates, though, to Bill 6, or what is Bill 6 now, is that we're adding another level to an area that already has about six committees dealing with the issues on the Great Lakes. Not only that, we have the whole regime around the Clean Water Act that makes me worry.

It's more than obvious that the Liberal government doesn't lack the legal tools to already protect the Great Lakes; it lacks the political leadership to get it done.

I've only been here for 18 years, and I would say this: It was the first day I've ever seen it in this Legislature where the government failed to vote on a piece of legislation. It's shameful, and it's cowardly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the speaker to concentrate on the bill that you're speaking to, and let's not stray.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it does fit, because—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I've already warned the other members. I will give you the same warning.

Mr. John O'Toole: Very good. I was surprised at that, and I'm sure you were too, as the Speaker, that they sat on their hands. I won't talk about it anymore, but I'm sure other speakers will.

At every turn, the Liberals have attempted to reinvent the wheel, and this is one more example. Bill 91 is another environmental ministry bill. It's the same deal. They're actually doing—and our critic, Michael Harris, who I know will be speaking on this bill, Bill 6, spoke this morning, and I was very, very impressed how polite and professional he was in pointing out the redundancies in Bill 91. He unravelled a very complex piece of legislation, Bill 91, and simplified it for myself and other members of the Legislature who are interested in the environment. We are, as well, interested in the environment. Don't let anyone think that we don't realize how important clean water, air and soil are for all of us in the quality of life we enjoy.

This bill also gives public bodies, including municipalities and conservation authorities, the token role of requesting new regulatory areas, but real power ultimately rests with cabinet, which must approve an initiative at the proposal and finalization stage, and the guardians' council, which is responsible for the development and implementing of these proposals. If passed, this bill would permit these unelected councils, stacked with Liberal cronies and radical activists, to bypass the Legislative Assembly and create onerous new regulations that would hamper farming—and I think of Huron county and other areas. I think of home builders, manufacturers, tourist opportunities and boaters and marinas, and this is going to be intrusive. I have no problem with the authorities that exist today, municipal and conservation authorities, to have strengthened authorities, but this bill intrudes the provincial government, who can't run the environment today.

I talked respectfully to the Minister of the Environment on three or four issues in my riding, on clean fill, on the management of spreading sewage sludge on farm fields, all these things that are very problematic, to my way of thinking. I would also expect that the thrust of waste and recycling in Ontario today is another area that is just fraught with red tape and a lack of clarity.

1720

The Liberals have not provided any financial information in Bill 6 as well. We don't know how much the guardian council will cost. Hopefully, they won't get nearly as much as some of the people working at the Pan Am Games—\$500,000 a year for a sporting event? Wait a minute, here. Look at how successful the NHL is. I hope the government never gets involved in that, because they'll ruin it. "I'm from government, and I'm here to help you." I don't think so.

We don't know how much this council is costing, and no serious piece of legislation leaves such an important issue—infrastructure, the glue of all legislation, has to

have an enforcement process, which takes money. The people will all have new, blue uniforms and will be around giving out tickets to everybody who's got a boat anchored offshore. That's sad, really, having been a boater and knowing how difficult it is—the marinas.

The stated purpose of the bill, to protect and restore the ecology and health of the lakes, is an issue that I believe will receive a lot of discussion here this afternoon. I'm looking forward to my colleague from Barrie adding some valuable insight. He's got a serious background as a municipal councillor, and he's also the one who discovered the shameful waste going on at the Pan/Parapan Am Games, and the minister should be ashamed about it, too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to join the debate on Bill 6 and to follow the remarks by the member from Durham.

We're talking about the Great Lakes. It's a body of water that contains 40% of all of Canada's economic activity, from manufacturing to fisheries to tourism and recreation, aggregates and mining. Shipping on the Great Lakes contributes \$200 million each year to the provincial GDP. We've got hydroelectric power from rivers that feed the Great Lakes. We have 400,000 species of plants, fish and wildlife in the Great Lakes area. Speaker, this is obviously an important issue.

As we're here in October 2013, I turn my mind back to a day—I think it was spring 2012, so almost a year and a half ago; a beautiful, sunny day. At the last minute, we heard that the minister was going to make an announcement, on such a beautiful and picturesque day, down by Lake Ontario—a beautiful day to talk about the great natural resource we have in our Great Lakes.

Almost a year and a half later, we're back here, and at that time, that bill died on the order paper. Actually, it never moved forward, but it did die on the order paper because, as we all know at this point, this government put its own interests first, prorogued Parliament and tried to dodge a costly gas plant scandal, cancelling power plants.

It's not surprising that we stand here this afternoon. It's not surprising at all. With these extraordinarily pressing matters in front of us, it's not surprising. But it is shocking that on this day in October 2013, almost a year and a half after this great announcement, both the governing Liberal Party of Ontario and the Conservative Party voted together to put the interests, not of the people of Ontario, our great natural resources and our Great Lakes first, but to put the interests of one company, EllisDon, first, and that is extraordinary—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. I have warned all your colleagues about straying away from the bill that's in front of us, so I give you the same warning.

Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's interesting to see what the reaction is. I think we have one party that thinks we're going too far and another party that says we're not

going far enough, which means we've probably hit the middle, where we should be, on issues of this kind, although this can be very aggressive.

I say to the previous member, who was commenting on the general speaker today, that one of the reasons the legislation was unable to move was that one of the political parties in the House had, until very recently, decided to delay all bills in the House. Therefore, we were unable to proceed with a lot of legislation we thought was exceedingly important.

The fact is, it's before us now. There has been some debate that took place on the previous bill, and now we debate on this.

I know the member for the NDP who spoke is going to say we should get this through so we can get to committee, so we can make any changes that are necessary, have people that we can hear from on the specifics of the bill, and have what I would call the new and improved bill that has input from all members of the House. I heard him mention, near the end, another bill or another incident happening, when they talked about fundraising and how it relates to bills—except he had a fundraiser the other night at Hart House—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister, I'll give you the same warning.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I just wanted to say, I'm wondering who would have attended that, at \$500 apiece. But you're right: I shouldn't deal with that; I should deal with the speech that was made previously.

I just hope that the member who raised some environmental issues will recognize that this bill has the potential to be very beneficial, particularly for those who happen to reside next to the Great Lakes—though it's important to all of us—or the tributaries going into the Great Lakes.

I hope that we will see the Conservative Party, along with the New Democratic Party, ultimately supporting this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add a few comments today.

One of the things that struck me when this bill was first introduced was, it's another piece of legislation to try to deal with the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence basin. Not only is it another piece of legislation, but with a council, it then is another bureaucracy in the making. It just seems to me that when this is a very complex jurisdictional—obviously, the federal governments of two countries have a role to play, as well as many provinces and states, each one of which has its own entire directory of ministries and associations, voluntary groups. The list just goes on and on. I was amazed to think that we were short of organizations whose goal was to look after the Great Lakes. I would have thought that there were other things we were short of, like projects or money, but not, certainly, yet another bureaucracy.

I also thought it was interesting, in looking at it; for instance, the creation of this council—and even in the legislation, it has to have that “extend written invitations

to individuals.” I know that may not sound like a particularly egregious thing to do, but it just shows you the micromanaging that comes into the development of legislation by this government. It lists the people who would be appropriate members of the council.

So, Mr. Speaker, the issue is, my fear is drowning in red tape.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really happy to be able to stand and speak about Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act.

The greatest concern that we have about this act is that it's going to start another council, which we've been hearing about from other members of this House. We have serious concerns going on in this province, and the best thing that the government seems to be able to come up with is another advisory council.

We have Line 9 being pushed through our province and coming right through portions just outside of my riding. What's that going to do to our drinking water if we have spillages? We've seen what has happened in Lake Michigan with the huge spillage that happened there. These are the kinds of things that we need to be acting on, that we need to be working harder on.

We have Randle Reef in the city of Hamilton, that's under a remediation process, that's actually just going to get some shovels in the water. They were supposed to already be there. We were supposed to have a completion by the year 2021 of capping that project and making sure that the sediment that is infecting our waters in Lake Ontario is being capped. I know that's a project that's actually just going to get started, but what's happening next? Where are we going with this committee? What are they going to be looking at? We see the species in our lakes that are diminishing on a regular basis; we see other species that are invasive to the native species that are there.

1730

We have a lot of concerns. We hope that this council is going to be actually putting some actions behind their words.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Durham, you have two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much. I thank the member from Davenport, as well as the members from Hamilton Mountain and York-Simcoe, of course, and the minister. It's a pleasure that the minister is here.

Here is the key. I think something that was mentioned by the member from Hamilton Mountain is the invasive species. Now, we've got to work with the United States to prevent them getting into our system any worse than they are; I completely agree. So there's no way that I would disagree with every segment of the bill.

I think it's the bureaucracy that I'm concerned about. I think it's the red tape that I'm concerned about. I think about. Where's the money for doing all this stuff, at a time—what I meant, briefly, in my remarks—when they're running out of money? In fact, they're spending,

right now, about \$2 million every day more than they're bringing in, every single day. In fact, the debt for every one of these pages is around \$20,000.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it is. How are they going to pay for this stuff? It's fine. It all sounds good, Minister; I understand that. It's motherhood.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, I guess you won't pay for it, and that's the even more troubling part, because section 26 is all about setting regulations for court orders, which are fines, basically, and fees and permits. This is money that the municipality should be getting, because the activity is happening in their jurisdiction.

But there is today, in my area, the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority. I was on that board for probably about four years, and they do great work in water management, in terms of floods and various functions, but they could be strengthened, given some resources to enforce and educate at the local level, as opposed to a brand new bureaucracy all getting paid for fancy dinners at fancy hotels, as far as I'm concerned, and going on these conventions.

There's already, as Ms. Munro said, a bureaucracy of six levels of government involved—state, federal, provincial, local—already involved in these governing councils that I mentioned, so I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Pursuant to standing order 47(c), there having been six and a half hours of debate on this bill, the debate will be deemed adjourned unless the House leader specifies otherwise.

The Minister of Tourism and Culture.

Hon. Michael Chan: —and Sport, and the minister responsible for the Pan and Parapan American Games.

Mr. Speaker, we would like debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Toronto-Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. It's good to see that I have a loyal following here in this chamber, those who have hung in right to the very last hour of the last day in this legislative week.

I'm going to be talking about the particulars of the bill, but before I talk about the particulars of the bill, I want to talk about the context. Mr. Bradley, our esteemed Minister of the Environment, a man who did extraordinary work on acid rain in the 1980s, is working with a very difficult government, one that he finds largely inert, one that is not moving forward on key issues. And I just want to note those, because when you look at the bigger picture, then one has one's perspective shaped on the bill before us.

As I said a few minutes ago, this government is not acting on climate change. I was here in 2007 when Arnold Schwarzenegger and Premier McGuinty stood on the steps of the main staircase here and swore their undying commitment to taking action on climate change. So when I see a bill that says it's going to take on the prob-

lems of the Great Lakes, that promises a bright, shining new day, a banishment of the winter of our discontent, look back at what was promised in 2007. At the time action on climate change was described as a sacred trust I have to say, if that was a sacred trust, God help something that's a low priority, because nothing will ever happen.

Speaker, as you may well be aware, this government not meeting its climate action targets. In fact, it's falling far, far behind them. The Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, in his recent report, *Failing Our Future*, on this government's climate inaction, noted that, as in the past three years, the prognosis is bleak. There has been no improvement in the emissions from the three biggest sectors—transportation, industry and building—since the climate change action plan began in 2007.

Speaker, if you don't act on climate change, virtually everything else you do with the Great Lakes will be irrelevant, because as Ontario heats up, as it becomes drier, as instances of intense rainstorms cause more flooding, more carriage of silt and toxins into the lakes you face a problem that a simple approach of little focused cleanups is not going to be able to address. So when the member for Parkdale-High Park expressed deep pessimism that anything would come out of this act she and I base that on a history of watching environmental initiatives announced to great glory and wonderful sunshine, and years pass with the action not coming forward and the problems continuing to deepen.

This morning I asked a question about the reversal of Line 9. It has huge impact in terms of the risk that it presents to the Great Lakes. Line 9 is an oil pipeline that cuts across southern Ontario through watersheds, really from Hamilton to Montreal. My colleague from Hamilton Mountain talked about the concerns in Hamilton.

In Michigan three years ago, an Enbridge pipeline by the Kalamazoo River broke and spilled millions of litres of heavy crude into the river: \$1 billion to clean up. As I understand it, the cleanup is still going on.

This government, saying that it wants to protect the Great Lakes, is not in fact putting in place an environmental assessment to take on the problems, take on the risks, that are posed by that line. Speaker, I believe you're from Scarborough-Rouge River. That line passes over the Rouge River.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The feds will do it.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To say that this government puts trust in the Harper government to protect the environment is extraordinary—extraordinary.

I refer you, Speaker, and the public to just read a number of newspapers that have been published in the last two years to see if anyone can have any confidence whatsoever in the federal government's approach to the environment. It's not there.

This government can't just stand by when it asks questions of Enbridge about safety and not use its power and authority and, frankly, some boldness to say, "We're going to have a full environmental assessment. We don't have confidence in your approach." If, in fact, Speaker,

this government wants to protect the Great Lakes, it needs to take that kind of action. A bill without that kind of action will be a hollow shell.

Speaker, the Deep Geologic Repository, the nuclear dump on the shores of Lake Huron, is being strongly opposed by the people in that area.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Federal.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have heard some mumbling from the other side that this is federal, but in fact it's the Ontario Power Generation company that is the proponent, that's going to put the material there, the one that's saying, "Let's do that." There may be a federal panel they speak to, but it is OPG, an Ontario project.

Speaker, I have to say to you right now that if, in fact, you won't take action on climate change, you won't protect Ontario from Enbridge's reversal of Line 9 and you won't take action on the DGR, then what is the utility of the bill other than as a pretty piece of paper that can be written about with pictures of water in campaign literature?

1740

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, maybe that's pretty. Yes, okay.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It can be pretty. I've seen pretty bills before. They have a certain verve to them, a certain bouquet, but in the end they just fade away.

This bill itself is acknowledging that the Great Lakes are hugely important to Ontario, to our economy and our ecology, and a source of drinking water for this great city and for many other cities. The Great Lakes are vital to the economy and people of Ontario.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Invasive species.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No question: the Great Lakes, threatened by invasive species, destruction of shoreline habitats and, increasingly, a problem of low water levels.

There is no question that legislation and action are needed—no debate on that. That's straightforward, but we need to ensure that this act is more than something symbolic: one that sets strong targets, requires that those targets are in place and that the action to meet them is adequately resourced, and that people are inspired to take action beyond what the government has set forward to protect this vital source of water, this vital source of life, in this province.

There are a few elements in this act. It sets up a guardians' council, to include a wide range of stakeholders including Great Lakes ministers, municipalities, First Nations and Métis communities. Setting that up in the absence of targets and resources is not a step forward. Setting it up, I don't have an opposition to. Making sure that there are targets and resources so that its work and considerations are of consequence: That makes sense. That's what we're lacking: targets and resources.

The bill refers to "geographically-focused initiatives," allowing local communities to address issues of concern, but as you know, Speaker, as a former member of your municipal council, municipalities are cash-strapped around Ontario. They find it hard to get together the cash to actually do those big cleanup projects, so I ask whether

or not this government is going to announce a program but never put the money in.

Look back, Speaker: We used to have a program to assist people to renovate their homes for energy efficiency. That was cut by this government. This government used to provide money for energy conservation audits—cut by this government. Announcing wonderful things and then not putting money in place to allow them to happen, not putting resources in place to ensure that they physically come into being, is an empty, empty gesture.

My colleague the member for Davenport is going to be in the committee when this bill goes for hearings. I'm sure he will fight for the amendments necessary to make sure that this bill does something rather than nothing. My colleague I know you will have your hands full. There's just no getting around it.

I understand that a variety of stakeholder groups and environmental groups have said to the minister previously that we have to have targets, that the minister needs to be required to set targets if they're not already set in the bill. That hasn't been accommodated. People will judge this bill by whether or not it does more than say nice things about Lake Ontario, Lake Erie, Lake Huron or Lake Superior.

The bill requires principles to decide or to guide decision-making. The Great Lakes Protection Act Alliance as well as Conservation Ontario suggest the inclusion of principles such as a science-based precautionary approach, an ecosystem approach, adaptive management, and a sustainable development approach. Those principles that should be shaping decision-making that comes out of this bill need to be reflected in the bill, need to be reflected right at the top so that as the bill is worked through, as decision-makers seek to make the bill actually have an impact, they will be guided by the thinking that this Legislature directs them to use. That is something that still needs to be addressed.

Every lake is fed by the streams and the brooks and the rivers that feed into it. If this government doesn't address the spill of toxic chemicals or algae-feeding nutrients into those rivers and streams and brooks, then ultimately the lake itself will not be healthy. So this piece of legislation needs to be accompanied by action, regulation or other legislation to ensure that those feeders, those tributaries, are all protected as well. It's not clear that that is what is on the table.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's on the way.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I understand—and I understand this through telepathy—that a certain minister has suggested that such legislation is on its way. I would say, Speaker, it might be a worthwhile thing to wait and see what legislation comes forward, to see if there is an integrated package, because I have heard about legislation coming soon on many things in my short stay in this Legislature, and—Speaker, you may understand this—it doesn't always happen.

The bill does not explicitly state that it has a goal of reducing the spillage or discharge of toxic substances

into the Great Lakes. There's concern about whether or not the bill will deal with combined sewer overflow and the discharge of sewage waste into the lakes. I have to say to you, Speaker: Many cash-strapped municipalities find it difficult to actually put the cash into those water pollution controls that they need, and we aren't seeing the kind of investment in soft infrastructure—the investment in tree canopies, in porous paving—that would reduce the amount of combined sewage overflow. Those technologies are ones that actually could deliver, on a cost-effective basis, a big boost to our environment.

I say to the Minister of the Environment that there's an empire he could build here if he had the interest, and I suggest that he not hold back. Don't let his government shackle him. Let Jim Bradley be Jim Bradley. That's what we need.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Amen.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I get consensus in my caucus on that.

But I know that you, sir, Minister of the Environment, walk a very rough road, and we here all sympathize with you. We could see that in some instances, it's a long, slow path to get somewhere, and in others, as with EllisDon, things get swept through at a racing car's pace. I know, Minister of the Environment, it's a tough, tough road that you are walking.

This bill has minimum funding attached to it. According to the Environmental Commissioner, chronic underfunding has been a key weakness of the Canada-Ontario Agreement Respecting the Great Lakes Basin Ecosystem. Well, I have to say, this is something that's going to have to be addressed to make this more than just a pretty bill with a great cover—not that I have anything against a great cover on a bill, but it has to be more than that if you're actually going to protect the water that we drink, that we swim in, that our children swim in, that, frankly, at one time we harvested an awful lot of fish out of—not so much anymore. Not so much.

If this bill is going to be useful, it has to have a requirement for targets. I've mentioned that before. It is going to have to have reporting mechanisms so that we can tell whether those targets are being met or ignored.

We have to have action on immediate and pressing threats.

We need to have a situation in which all municipalities have plans in place to deal with sewage overflows. As of December 2010, only about half had such plans. That's got to happen.

We need to reinstate the practice of reporting data on phosphorus and other pollutant levels from municipal waste water plants.

All I'm asking for is reasonable action to actually deliver on the promise that's been made by the minister made apparently at a very sunny, warm, friendly, fuzzy event—

Mr. Jonah Schein: With children there.

Mr. Peter Tabuns:—where children were present. A promise was made in the presence of children. I'm sure that that promise will have to be fulfilled.

I think, Speaker, having watched this government bring in a number of initiatives where the goods didn't get delivered, that it is not unreasonable for us in this party or those who are watching this debate this afternoon to feel skeptical. I call on the minister to listen to the advice that has been provided by the Environmental Commissioner, and to continue to fight within his caucus within his government, for funds to actually make things happen. I call for him to go beyond what he has presented today, to listen to the wise advice of my colleagues from Davenport when this gets to committee and amend this bill so it has the impact that we need.

Just because a minister is criticized from one side for not going far enough and from another side for going too far doesn't mean he's landed in the right spot. I've seen people on one side, on a cliff, and then on another cliff on the other side of a valley. If you fall in the middle, have to say, it's not necessarily a good spot. You want to be up on the dry land. You want to be up on the top, on that high ground.

I appreciate all of the environmental groups who pushed hard for Great Lakes legislation. I have confidence that they won't stop pushing now that this bill is before us. It's my hope that they come and speak, that they agitate, that they organize, so that when this comes before committee, the sorts of changes that they have asked for, the sorts of changes I've mentioned this afternoon, the kinds of changes that my colleague the critic for the environment has raised, will be addressed, and addressed early.

Speaker, I see that we're beginning to get low on time. I think I've said what I need to say. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 7, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1753.

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		Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
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Chair / Président: Vacant
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 7 October 2013

Lundi 7 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 7 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 7 octobre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to welcome Joan Pajunen, from the riding of Parry Sound–Muskoka, living in Kilworthy to be specific. She's a director at large with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, and she's here today. I met with her and Marita Tonkin and Andrew Hamilton, who were helping to educate me on how pharmacists can save money for the health system and benefit patients.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to welcome to the Legislature here this morning Barry Smith, Marilyn Dolmage, Bill Hiltz, Joyce Balaz, Thelma Wheatley, Desmond Sricoll, John Penner and Theresa Devine, survivors from Huronia.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please welcome, in the east members' gallery, Billy Cheung, who is a former president of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and a resident of Oak Ridges–Markham.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I also wish to introduce two people from the Ontario Pharmacists' Association: Marita Tonkin, the hospital rep for the Guelph area; and Andrew Hamilton, a Waterloo student rep and also a local farm boy from Norfolk county.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have the pleasure to introduce the chair of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association, who happens to be from my riding. His name is Carlo Berardi; welcome to Queen's Park. I also wanted to introduce Billy Cheung, Kenny Chan and Sherif Guorgui, who came and visited me. They're all from the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, too, would like to welcome the Ontario pharmacists today: Dennis Darby, CEO; Carlo Berardi, board chair; and a pharmacist from my riding, Jim Semchism. He lives and works in London North Centre.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce—I'm not sure if she's here yet or not—a former staffer here at Queen's Park: Marsha Josephs. She's here with her son Matthew Britton, and they were with the grade 5 class from Beynon Fields Public School.

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to welcome Kenny Chan, a constituent of mine from Markham–Unionville. He's studying at the University of Toronto.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce Mike Cavanagh today, with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association. Mike practises in Lindsay, but he's a native of Omemee, and donates a lot of his time in many community events. Thank you for coming, Mike.

Mr. Mike Colle: We have some very special guests here today from the riding of Brampton West. On behalf of the MPP from Brampton West, the Honourable Vic Dhillon, I'd like to introduce the grade 10 class from St. Edmund Campion secondary school in Brampton West. Welcome.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have some friends here from Windsor West. I'd like to introduce our local PC candidate there, Henry Lau, as well as Eric Renaud and Josh Cheifetz. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to introduce one of the pharmacists here today, and that would be Stacy D'Angelo from the Windsor–Tecumseh area.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to join my colleagues in welcoming members of the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and, among them, a constituent from my riding of St. Paul's, the vice-chair of the OPA, Deb Saltmarche.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's my pleasure to introduce the many employees—some are in the gallery now—who are joining us today from EllisDon. They're going to be up in the public gallery to show their support for keeping a fair and competitive construction industry in Ontario through the passage of Bill 74. As we know, EllisDon is an Ontario company, one that we should be—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. While we always welcome our visitors to Queen's Park, one of the things that we don't do is participate in any way in expression. I thank you for being here, but I also remind all of us that we don't do that in the galleries.

Further introductions?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I, too, would like to welcome all my colleagues: the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and all the pharmacists who are visiting Queen's Park today. Let's hope that at the end of the day, the government of today will actually recognize the OPA as the voice of pharmacists.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I will take a moment to remind all members that it's introductions and only introductions.

I'm now here to introduce, on behalf of page Erica George: mother, Jennifer Reid-George; father, Edward George; older sister Lauren George; younger sister Vanessa George; grandfather Michael George; and cousin

Julianna George. Welcome to Queen's Park, visiting page Erica.

Finally, we have in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Swedish Parliament's friendship association for Canada. They are accompanied by Mr. Lars Henriksson, the Honorary Consul of Sweden in Toronto. Welcome. Thank you for being here, and enjoy your stay.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. After waiting two very long years to find out the true cost of the cancelled Oakville power plant, Ontarians will finally learn tomorrow what the true cost of that cancellation was, from the auditor. These costs, combined with the cancelled Mississauga power plant, are being paid by ratepayers, consumers and ultimately taxpayers. Their hard-earned money went to save Liberal seats in the last election without their consent. And as is convention, we know that you or your officials have either seen the report or one of its drafts from the auditor.

So, Premier, with that in mind, and given that you signed the cabinet document to cancel Oakville, and the fact that you were the Liberal campaign co-chair in the last election, and the fact that you have been Premier now for eight months, why have you refused to tell Ontarians exactly how much those cancelled gas plants have cost individuals across this province, and will you do it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, the member opposite knows, and she has said, that the Auditor General's report will be released tomorrow. I wrote to the Auditor General of the day asking for a report on the cost of the relocation of the gas plant from Oakville. That report will be released tomorrow, and I'm not going to pre-empt the Auditor General's release of that report. I actually can't do that. I will be briefed on the report this afternoon, and I look forward to the release of the report by the Auditor General tomorrow.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, back to the Premier: She knows the true cost of her election decisions. Ontarians know that she has the auditor's number. She herself told the media today what she has seen in the estimates was "unacceptably large." Why should she make us wait another 24 hours? She knows it. Surely the Premier will admit that the cancelled gas plants were on the government's books for as many as eight years before they posed an electoral threat to her Liberal Party.

If the Premier won't divulge the details today, tomorrow we will find out what the true cost was to save the Oakville member's seat. When we add that to the Mississauga cancellation bill, we'll have a little more sense of

how little regard she and her predecessor Mr. McGuinty had for those who are footing their electoral bill.

So, Premier, why have you hidden the full cost impact of the cancelled plants from the public for so long, and since you refuse to do it today, after the auditor's report tomorrow will you stand in your place, apologize to the people of Ontario and tell—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've already apologized to the people of Ontario. I have said repeatedly that there were decisions made on the relocation of the plant that should have been made differently. We should have paid more attention to the community. The Minister of Energy is developing and has put in place new processes going forward.

Let's remember how we got here. The government listened to the advice of experts. We sited two power plants over the objections of local residents, which should not have happened. Over time, it became evident that the concerns of the residents were based in evidence and were legitimate. The government listened to those concerns, cancelled those power plants for relocation elsewhere.

The Conservatives and the NDP both agreed that that's what should have been done. There was a cost associated with that, but estimates of that cost have varied. That is why I have asked the Auditor General to report on the cost. That report will be released tomorrow, as the member fully knows.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: If the Premier wants to talk about how we got here, I will tell her. Let's remember how we got here.

You and several of your cabinet colleagues stood in this House and said one thing on the true cost and said another thing to committee about the true cost. Your government obstructed the work of an officer of this assembly, the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

After saying that there were emails and documents that were deleted, and we couldn't have them tabled, you then found them after you were caught. You used public finances to win five seats in the last election, and Ontarians want to know how much that is personally going to cost them on their tax bills and their energy bills.

Now you have been caught. Why do you refuse to come clean in this assembly on what is arguably the largest electoral fraud in the province's history?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Before we continue, I would ask all members—I was hearing some things that I would classify as borderline,

so I'm not going to say anything specific, but I will say that some of the verbiage that was used caught me a little bit off guard. I would normally have said not to use it. So I'm going to caution all members from here on in that I will be sharper and probably quicker in my responses to those kinds of questions—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—which does not require anyone to be speaking while I'm trying to explain something.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Well, the baseless allegations notwithstanding, I think that everyone in this House knows that we have provided 160,000 pages of documents in response to requests from the committee. The committee has heard from 62 witnesses—93 hours of testimony. We've responded to 32 motions. We've offered all of the documents, and we have provided an opportunity for all of those questions to be asked and answered.

The reason I asked the Auditor General to make a report on the relocation of the Oakville gas plant is that there were numbers that were varying, and we wanted to have the Auditor General's report to bring some clarity to those numbers. That report will be released tomorrow. In fact, I would be prevented from releasing that information even if I had it, Mr. Speaker. It will be released tomorrow.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. At the last minute last week, we received an internal Pan Am audit not from three weeks ago, but from a year ago, and guess what we found? More bad-faith expenses not in compliance with your own policies, including common submissions without receipts and without details. We also found more petty expenses by top-paid executives, including airport snacking, dry cleaning for \$300, Internet for a vacation, a CA membership and "miscellaneous," costing hundreds of dollars.

Minister, when will you actually do something and have these expenses reviewed and repaid where appropriate?

Hon. Michael Chan: The member is right that the audit was done last year, and the audit was completed in 2012, about October or November.

P/PAGS and my ministry engaged the board right after the audit and asked the board to address those recommendations. The board agreed to address all those recommendations. This is why, in May 2013, the policy related to travel, meals and expenses—that policy was strengthened. That's what happened when the audit came out last year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Your policy wasn't strengthened, because the same thing is happening, Minister.

Speaker, the minister and the Premier stood together, united in supposed ignorance of the Pan Am expense problem, and told us they only found out three weeks ago last week. You know what? You're both busted here. The audit was dated for October 2012. You both knew about these problems for a year and did nothing and denied knowing. But your deputy minister told us that your secretariat babysits TO2015, so you had to know.

I know there has been some confusion for you. Presumably, you're the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games—it's in your title, right there. Minister, the same expensing violations have been ongoing since last year's audit. You chose to do nothing until three weeks ago, or, frankly, until now.

Hon. Michael Chan: As I said before, the policy was strengthened in May 2013. That addressed the audit that came out in 2012 in October and November.

Speaker, I'd like to bring it to your attention that three or four weeks ago, after those expenses came to my attention, this is what I have done:

(1) I asked the board to strengthen the policy.

(2) I asked them to report to me as soon as possible—in the latest, in the next meeting.

(3) I asked them to put all future expenses online.

(4) I wanted them, once the policy is strengthened, to post it online.

(5) I asked them to make sure it won't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, you knew about this a year ago. These actions should have been taken a year ago, not last week, not the week before—a year ago. Nothing makes you backpedal like the facts, Minister.

We discovered three things in this audit: \$7 million in obscene bonuses rewarding executives 200% of their base salary just for showing up for work; TO2015 executive and secretariat salaries that eclipse the sunshine list; unlimited, unchecked expense accounts where no charge is too small for the taxpayer to pick up.

Instead of owning your portfolio, Minister, and fixing this, you spent the better part of last week denying you were even responsible for it, instead pointing to the board. The thing is, Minister, I agree with you: You aren't the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Will you step down today and fix this for once and for all?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you so much for the question again.

Speaker, I'd like to let you know where we stand at the moment in terms of the accomplishments by the Pan Am 2015 board. All the infrastructure—they are on time, on budget. The earlier they come in here—it's under budget. Speaker, it will be about \$50 million under budget. This is great work.

1050

The ministry does not set salaries for TO2015 employees. They are not an agency of the government. I shared the same concerns over the subject and sought an explanation from the TO2015 board. A third-party human resources firm was retained to provide recommendations and expertise in—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Chan: —the salary and compensation structure.

Speaker, these games have been able to attract—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. People dealing with tough times expect their government to focus on their priorities, like creating jobs and improving health care, but lately, they're wondering about the priorities of this government. Can the Premier explain why, in tough times, she thinks that Pan Am executives deserve bonuses of up to \$780,000?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to speak to the issue of the executive compensation. As I have said and as the minister has said many times, we competed with many jurisdictions to get these games, Mr. Speaker, and we competed within a context of a certain level of salary compensation for the executives in the games. That's the reality. We decided, collectively, that we wanted to bring the games to Ontario, and that is what has happened.

I understand the concerns around the expenses. There was an auditor's report. The minister responded and tightened up the expenses. Again, they were tightened up three weeks ago. The minister gave instructions to the board. But we—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We competed for the games. As the minister has said, the federal, provincial and municipal governments established the compensation packages.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it's pretty funny that the Premier, who thought 91 cents in parking was outrageous, has no problem handing out a bonus of nearly a million dollars.

People learned about these very bonuses just days after hearing that Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment had received a \$500,000 government grant. Can the Premier explain why, in tough times, she thinks a corporation with an estimated worth in the billions and billions needs a government handout?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just talk about jobs, because the leader of the third party—so the Pan Am Games—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shouting people down is not the best response.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

Twenty-six thousand jobs have been created as a result of the Pan Am Games.

The \$500,000 investment in tourism around the NBA all-star week: \$95 million in return can be expected from that investment.

I think we have to ask ourselves, do we want, as a province, to be able compete with the world for sports events? Do we believe in Ontario's ability to attract tourists as a world-class destination? If we do, then we're on the right track.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the people who make this province work every day have been waiting for results on their priorities. Instead, they see a Premier who seems to live on a totally different planet. The Premier is defending executive bonuses and handouts to companies worth billions of dollars.

Can the Premier tell us how much, in tough times, the government is going to be spending cancelling the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, here's what I'm defending. I'm defending investment in jobs, creation of jobs in this province. I'm defending investment in young athletes. The venues that are going to be produced for the young athletes in this province will be world-class. We don't have those venues now. We need them. We need them for swimmers and cyclists and runners. I can tell you, finding a decent indoor track, a decent training facility in this province is not easy. We need those venues. So I'm defending those investments.

At the same time, we have a broad strategy across the province to invest in people and in infrastructure and create a business climate. This is just one part of that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. People in Ontario are watching as the bills go up and their paycheques stay the same, if they are lucky. But they are seeing this government hand out all kinds of money for CEO bonuses that are more than most people earn in a decade, and millions more spent scraping private power deals in Oakville and Mississauga just to help the Liberals in an election campaign.

David from Omeme says he hasn't seen any help making his life more affordable or better. He writes, "Ontarians are consistently being asked to take wage freezes

and cuts but my auto insurance, regulated by the government, is allowed an 11% raise this year and 7% last year.”

What does the Premier have to say to people like David?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I would say to David in Omeme and people across the province, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a responsibility, collectively, to do everything in our power to invest in people, in infrastructure and in a business climate that will create jobs. That is exactly what we are doing.

I had the opportunity today to present awards at the Premier's Agri-Food Summit. There is huge innovation happening in agriculture and ag food processing across this province. There's innovation, there's investment in technology and there's an expansion in that sector that we are going to foster, advance and encourage.

I know that the agri-food sector in this province has huge potential. By 2020, we are challenging the agri-food sector to increase by 120,000 jobs—to double their output. We are going to be able to do that because there is so much potential in the agri-food sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the average Ontarian, this government seems completely out of touch. When they aren't handing out lavish bonuses and perks to executives, they're doing whatever they can to save their own political skin, and every time it's families that are paying the bill.

Linda in Ottawa is dealing with cutbacks in her husband's health care supports. She says, “My husband is a dialysis patient three times per week. His nurses have been cut ... I am so disgusted with our health care system.”

Can the Premier tell Linda why cancelling private power deals in Oakville to save some Liberal seats was the government's priority over her husband's nursing care?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The priorities of government are multi-faceted, and nursing care and support for people who are ill and who need support is a top priority of ours. I think the leader of the third party knows full well that our investments in health care, and particularly our supports for community care and helping people to get the supports they need, are absolutely critical.

But at the same time, it is important for us to make investments to bring tourists to the province, to create infrastructure. I was in Simcoe last week, and in Simcoe we talked about the investments in roads and bridges and water systems in small towns in rural Ontario. Those communities need those investments if they're going to be able to grow their economic plans.

Government has to be able to do many things at the same time, Mr. Speaker: care for those who are ill and make investments that are going to create jobs. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: New Democrats have been pretty clear about what our priorities are, and we've been delivering results: creating jobs, strengthening health care, making life more affordable and making Queen's Park more transparent and more accountable for the people of this province. But people look at the Liberal government, and this is what they see: executives getting bonuses that are literally worth more than 20 times what a single mom would earn in a single year—what about a decent job for the single moms in the province of Ontario?—hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars wasted just to save the political fortunes of the Liberal Party.

What does the Premier have to say to the people who think her policies and priorities are backward?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have already said many, many times that the decisions made on the relocation of the gas plants were not what they should have been. I've apologized for that. The Auditor General will report tomorrow, because I asked the Auditor General to report; we'll have that report tomorrow.

What I would say to people who are looking for a job is that I completely agree with the leader of the third party that it is important—and, quite frankly, with the Leader of the Opposition—that it is government's responsibility to do everything in our power to create the environment where business can flourish.

1100

Investments in infrastructure, Mr. Speaker, and the people who will be working as a result of the Pan Am Games because of the building that's happening and because of that attraction of tourists to the province—all of that is our responsibility; all of that is creating jobs. We will continue to do that work for the very reason that the leader of the third party notes: that there are people in this province who still need work. It's our responsibility to create the environment for those jobs to be—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. EllisDon is an employee-owned, London, Ontario-based company that was recently named the number two best employer in Canada and one of Canada's best-managed companies. EllisDon is currently facing intense pressure from foreign competitors. However, my Bill 74 takes a firm stand in support of Ontario workers and Ontario employers.

Premier, shamefully, last week, you flip-flopped and said that my bill is no longer needed and that you would no longer be supporting it. We know that the sheet metal workers plan to appeal the Divisional Court ruling. When the decision is appealed, will you resume your support of my important bill, or will you continue to favour foreign corporations over Ontario workers?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order, and he knows why I don't like what he's doing.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I welcome the folks into the gallery today from EllisDon.

I think we've been very clear that we believe that a level playing field is what should be in place, which is why we expressed support for the bill in the first place.

But from my perspective, one of the aspects of a rational process is that if circumstances change, then it is perfectly reasonable that the approach would change. The Divisional Court has made a ruling that quashed the decision of the Labour Relations Board. In other words, the company can continue to operate as it was prior to the Labour Relations Board case. The circumstances changed.

The Ministry of Labour lawyers have advised us that this ruling achieves exactly what the outcome was that was being sought by Bill 74. So our position is that the bill is no longer needed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Last week your government bowed to union pressure and announced you would no longer support my bill, which will ensure fairness and competitiveness in Ontario's construction industry. As you have agreed in the past, Premier, it is unfair to expect EllisDon to live by one set of rules while foreign competitors undercut them, putting at risk thousands of good-paying jobs in the province. Both the Carpenters' Union, representing 20,000 workers, and LIUNA, representing 75,000 workers, have agreed and support my bill. Bill 74 will maintain the status quo for EllisDon and settle this issue once and for all, but your colleague Pat Dillon has asked you to oppose it, and clearly you have listened.

Premier, if you say that Bill 74 is no longer necessary, why is the company in question represented here today by so many employees?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I do want to welcome the hard-working women and men from EllisDon who are here in the House. Thank you very much for coming to your Legislature.

Speaker, the facts remain the same on this matter since we spoke last time in this House; I believe it was on Thursday. As everyone knows, the Ontario Divisional Court rendered a decision on Friday, September 27. In that decision, the court quashed the decision that was rendered before by the Ontario Labour Relations Board, which means, in effect, that the status quo in the province of Ontario, which is a subject of Bill 74, remains the same. There is status quo now.

We've been advised by the Ministry of Labour that, in essence, there is no need anymore for Bill 74. However,

there is a period to appeal, and the deadline is October 15 by 4 p.m. We should wait for that timeline.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Good morning, Minister.

As the minister knows, the province no longer requires independent, rigorous testing or inspection with design-build and performance-based contracts. We've seen the results of that with the girder controversy on the Herb Gray Parkway in Windsor, where lawyers are now speculating and saying that the government may be liable should a failure occur in the future.

Minister, how many other infrastructure projects are currently under way with no independent testing being done on behalf of the owner, the government?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Good morning to the honourable member, who is quickly becoming one of my favourite MPPs.

Mr. Speaker, you often ask us to take a race to the top, and I want to commend the honourable member for leading that race to the top.

I want to be fair to the honourable member, so I'm going to review this with the ministry to get the exact details about the testing regime. There is a very rigorous testing regime that goes into place. They are not political decisions made out of the minister's office; they are decisions made by the Ministry of Infrastructure and the Ministry of Transportation, and I will be sure to get him the details on that. I appreciate the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The executive director of the Canadian Council of Independent Laboratories says in a news release that the way the government has been doing business in these infrastructure projects is "a big mistake—a serious and potentially dangerous mistake." Without independent verification, there is no assurance that the materials and construction meet standards.

Minister, will you commit today to changing the way the government has been overseeing these major construction projects and insist in the future that independent testing is carried out on behalf of the ministry and the results are submitted directly to the ministry?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have right now the safest roads and the safest bridges in North America, which is quite an accomplishment when you think about Ontario's vast geography, its weather and how many of our highways are isolated in the north. Our northern members will tell you how fickle the weather is and how challenging that situation could be.

I have a great deal of confidence in the existing regime, but to answer your question, yes, we are right now, because we've had I think about five years with our alternative financing program—the Ministry of Infrastructure is actually reviewing things like bundling, oversight and project administration, and those recommendations would be coming forward. I will commit to meet with the

member opposite, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, to review those with him and to ensure that he is satisfied with the level of review. If you feel that more is necessary, I would certainly give it active consideration.

Again, I appreciate his question.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour l'honorable ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Despite the unseasonably warm weather, the annual flu season will soon be upon us. Among the many recommendations that a physician might offer to people to avoid getting the flu, the best one is this: Get a flu shot. This is one of those cost-effective, broad-spectrum recommendations that we can make to essentially all Ontarians. Everyone can benefit from immunization against influenza viruses, and as parliamentarians we should all be working hard in our collective spheres of influence to encourage Ontarians to get immunized.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Health: Would you please inform this chamber about what the government is doing to expand easy, timely and efficient access to the annual flu shot?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning.

Thanks to the member for Etobicoke North for this very important question. A year ago, I announced that we'd be expanding access to the flu shot by allowing pharmacists to immunize their patients. Pharmacists are not only key members of the health care team, they are key members of their communities. They are highly accessible to their patients and they bring care closer to home.

Starting last fall, Ontarians could go to a participating pharmacy where specially trained pharmacists gave them their flu shot. It has been a tremendous success. Last year, pharmacists administered a quarter of a million flu shots, and more and more pharmacists are being trained to administer injections. This year, we expect that the number of pharmacies offering the flu shot will more than triple.

I'm pleased to welcome the Ontario Pharmacists' Association to the Legislature today. We've worked closely to expand access to the flu shot for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1110

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: As a physician parliamentarian, I'm heartened to see my fellow health care practitioners, our Ontario pharmacists, be a greater part of our flu-shot-delivery model. As an example, a number of pharmacies in Etobicoke North have enabled Ontarians to get their flu shot in a convenient and timely manner.

Pharmacists are among the most trusted of all professions. Ontarians can rely on their pharmacists to help them make decisions about health care and navigate the system.

Speaker, could the Minister of Health inform this House about the expanding collaborative approach that the government is taking so that Ontarians can best benefit from the skills, experience and training of Ontario pharmacists?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are working to expand pharmacists' scope of practice. We're shifting from a model where pharmacists just dispense medication to one in which they draw from their remarkable and extensive skills and knowledge to provide care. This means more people can get excellent coordinated care closer to home. That's fundamental to the reforms we're making in health care.

In 2007, we launched the MedsCheck Program. This lets Ontarians sit down with their pharmacist to ensure they're safely and appropriately using their medications.

Allowing pharmacists to administer the flu shot was another important way in which we've leveraged pharmacists' skills to benefit Ontarians.

We're working with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association to find even more ways to best employ their extensive knowledge.

I want to thank Ontario pharmacists for all of their great work.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question this morning is for the Premier. Today is the third anniversary of your Oakville seat-saver program. I want to give you one last chance to come clean with Ontarians.

Liberal witness after Liberal witness has tried to snow first the estimates committee and then the justice committee. Here we are more than a year in and we still don't know how much it cost to cancel the Oakville power plant. You and your energy minister continue to insist it's \$40 million when the evidence shows that's the farthest thing from the truth. You've now called that number "unacceptably large," but the cabinet minute you signed got the whole ball rolling.

Premier, will you tell us how much you spent to cancel the Oakville plant and how much our hydro rates are going to go up to pay for it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, tomorrow afternoon, an officer of this assembly will be announcing her findings in terms of the costing of Oakville. But, you know, we're still waiting on the Progressive Conservative Party to come forward with the costing that they had before they made very similar promises.

The member mentions the justice committee. Let me share with him some quotes.

We have Frank Clegg, chairman for Citizens for Clean Air, who had this to say to the justice committee:

"We met with all the parties and all the candidates and were given commitments by every candidate in the Oakville area that they would support cancelling the plant.

"Well, I know that certainly Ted Chudleigh, who was the candidate MPP from north of Oakville, was very active in his support of cancelling the plant. During that plant battle—I'll use that word—PCs did not have a confirmed nominee, but we met with two or three potential candidates, and each of them had said they would support that."

Maybe the honourable member will share the costing that they had for the Oakville plant.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, the bottom line is that an honest, competent government would know the cost to cancel the Oakville plant and would tell the people of Ontario. An honest, competent government wouldn't wait three years until they're held at pen-point by the Auditor General to come clean.

It's three years later and you're still saying one thing when you know the opposite to be true. You can run but, after tomorrow, you can no longer hide. By signing the cabinet document, you knew what was going to be "unacceptably large."

Here's another chance to save a shred of credibility: Premier, when did you know it was more than \$40 million, and how much is your seat-saver program going to cost Ontarians?

Hon. John Milloy: I would suggest that an honest and competent opposition would have had costing before they made the exact same promise.

Here's what the member from Halton had to say in this House on September 14, 2010: "Oakville residents have called on you to change the location of the proposed Oakville power plant.... I have listened to the people of Oakville, and I agree with them."

The member from Halton, in a press release, September 14, 2010: "Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant?... I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant."

What about the mayor of Oakville, Rob Burton? This is what he had to say to the justice committee on March 19: "In Oakville, we certainly ... had those promises and that we could rely on them from all three parties.... So yes, we felt supported by all parties."

On March 19: "Oakville was very encouraged by the fact that all three parties were so responsive to our concern."

Mr. Speaker, it was a promise they made and a promise that we kept.

HURONIA REGIONAL CENTRE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Premier, this question is for you. I'm joined today by survivors of the Huronia Regional Centre, who are sitting in our galleries. Recently, their class action lawsuit was settled by your government. The most important part of the settlement was that they would finally receive an apology for the abuse and horrible neglect related to government action and inaction.

Will the Premier commit today that the official apology will come from her personally and not from a minister?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The court is still determining, as I understand it—and I know that the Attorney General is going to want to comment on that—the nature of an appropriate apology. We need to hear from that process, and I know, as I say, that the Attorney General is going to want to comment on that.

I just want to acknowledge the people who are in the gallery today. I particularly want to acknowledge Marilyn Dolmage. I don't know if people in this House know Marilyn well. I've worked with Marilyn for years, and I think there's probably not anyone in this province who has done more for people with disabilities, and children with special needs in the school system, to push governments of all stripes to do the right thing by young people and by people with disabilities. I want to acknowledge and honour her, and to thank her for that work over the years.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Thank you.

Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm sure we all thank the Premier for acknowledging Marilyn Dolmage. Quite frankly, what Marilyn would like is for you to commit to give an apology. That's what Marilyn would like.

Premier, the survivors don't want to be seen as clients of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, and they also don't want to be seen just as part of a legal action against the Attorney General. What they do want, what they do require, is to be seen as full citizens of the province of Ontario, which is what they would be if you, Premier, gave them an apology.

I ask again, will the Premier commit today that the official apology will come from her?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, they are full citizens of this province. They always have been and always should have been; that's number one.

Secondly, I don't think that any government in the past can be proud of the work that happened at Huronia since the late 1870s and 1880s.

As the Premier has already indicated, the matter is before a judge right now. I understand that there will be a hearing on December 3 to fully lay out the entire aspect with respect to the settlement, on an individual basis and on a collective basis. Right now, notices have gone out to about 4,500 individuals who may have a claim with respect to their residence at Huronia.

I might also add—and this may be no comfort to the residents at all—the class action was settled in a very fast manner, less than three years, which is unusual for a class action.

What happened at Huronia is simply unacceptable, and that's why this government felt it was important for everyone to settle this action as quickly and as soon—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1120

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Joe Dickson: A few weeks ago, I attended a half-day training session with our local firefighters, as did my colleague from Pickering-Scarborough East. It's clear that a firefighter's job is not an easy one. The equipment is heavy, and it takes an enormous amount of courage to enter a situation that everyone else is running away from. It's very, very intense.

Fire departments continue to aim to provide the very best response and emergency times and prevention education programs to their residents.

Yesterday marked the first day of Fire Prevention Week. This year, the Ajax and Pickering departments are focusing on kitchen fires.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Can you please tell us why kitchen fires were chosen as this year's focus for Fire Prevention Week?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member from Ajax-Pickering for this question.

We all know that cooking brings families together, and sharing meals with loved ones is one of life's great joys. But there are also dangers in the kitchen. Kitchen fires are the number one cause of home fires in the province. This year, we aim to give Ontario families some best practices to help them enjoy their time with loved ones and avoid preventable tragedies.

From 2011 to 2012, the number of fire deaths dropped from 86 to 70, the largest year-to-year drop in Ontario's history, but that number is still too high, and there is more we can do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Fire prevention education is important. It ensures that families are safe and take precautions to prevent a fire.

I know that the Office of the Fire Marshal and all the fire departments across the province tell us to have working fire alarms and smoke detectors in our homes and fire emergency plans and anything else that will assist in these emergencies. All of these measures have greatly reduced the number of fire fatalities in this province.

Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Speaker—all I need is one more piece of paper. My next question to my Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services is, what are the best practices to prevent kitchen fires from occurring?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: To make sure your family can continue to enjoy meals together without the threat of a kitchen fire, we recommend staying in the kitchen, especially if you are frying something or using a high temperature setting on the stove; keeping anything that can catch fire away from the stovetop; turning pot handles inward so no one, especially children, can knock hot oil or food to the floor; and wearing tight-fitting sleeves when cooking. Prevention is the most effective tool for

fighting fires, so please keep all of these best practices in mind when you're in the kitchen.

Happy early Thanksgiving Day for everyone and keep safe.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is for the Premier. Premier, we've heard that the auditor will table a report on the Oakville gas plant cancellation tomorrow. It will reveal the costs that have to be paid back by the taxpayer and the ratepayer.

As a quick reminder, the RFP for that project went out in 2004. Bids were considered, and it wasn't until September 2009 that a contract was signed for a 900-mega-watt plant. Within 13 months, the decision was made to not build that plant, with the explanation that the power was no longer needed. According to your version of events, power demand remained constant from 2004 to 2009, and then miraculously dropped by two thirds in a little over a year. While you swore that the cancellation would cost at most \$40 million, we know your mistake is going to cost at least \$310 million.

My question is, who got fired for that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It's interesting to hear the opposition finally talking about issues around siting plants. We, in fact, have asked the justice committee to look into it but, instead, the justice committee wants to simply play gotcha politics.

Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to be a witness at the justice committee. Let me tell you about my experience, particularly the first 10 minutes. I am not making this up. In the first 10 minutes the member from North Bay asked me about a document I had never seen, a document I had never signed and a briefing that I never attended. He spent 10 minutes asking me what I might have hypothetically done. It was pathetic.

We have a committee which has been charged with very serious work to look at some of the errors that were made around Mississauga and Oakville, and come up with some recommendations. It's time that committee got to work and gave the government the information that they can use and future governments can use.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier. One thing is perfectly clear: If someone does the Premier's bidding, they will never face any bad consequences for their actions.

Power demand just doesn't magically disappear overnight. The long-term energy plan reviews the long-term energy needs of the province, not the short-term. Whose job is it to oversee Ontario's needs in between long-term

energy plans if local demand can fall by two thirds within a year, and no one even notices?

We know that your government's gross incompetence on this file will cost Ontarians at least \$310 million. Would you give us an update today, in advance of the auditor's report, of what the final cost of you and your party's negligence on this file will be?

Hon. John Milloy: It is amusing to hear the member try to be thoughtful and be analytical about this when he refuses to stand up and explain why his party made the exact same commitments. Why did the Leader of the Opposition go on YouTube and say if he was Premier of this province the gas plant would be "done, done, done"? Why did the member from Halton over and over again call for the cancellation of the plants? Why have we had dozens of witnesses in front of the committee talk about the outstanding support that they received from the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party?

It's time that the Progressive Conservative Party started to explain to us their analysis and their costings. It's time that they allowed their candidates to come before the committee, instead of blocking them. It's time they came clean on a promise that they made to the people of Ontario.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The ponies aren't running like they used to at Sudbury Downs. The shortened season wraps up at the end of the week after only 20 races, leaving horse people in Sudbury and across the north worried about what happens next. They've seen uncertainty and layoffs across the board. When will the Premier offer some good news for a change, and provide long-term support for horse racing in Sudbury?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party asks a very important question about an issue that I have been working on very hard, with the Minister for Rural Affairs as well.

We know that the Slots at Racetracks Program was unsustainable. It was not sustainable. There was not transparency into that program. That's why the panel has been asked to prepare a five-year strategy so that we can put the horse racing industry on sustainable footing. That is exactly why my predecessor put the panel in place. Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen and John Wilkinson are working to make sure that the industry can be on that sustainable footing.

That's why we have a new chair at the OLG, so that we can have an integrated gaming strategy that includes the horse racing industry. That is the track that we're on, and we will have a sustainable horse racing industry in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Certainly, I don't have to remind the Premier that it was, in fact, the governing Lib-

erals who destabilized the horse racing industry in the first place in Ontario.

The Premier says she understands the needs of rural Ontario, but her government has nearly put an entire rural industry completely out of the running. Sudbury horse people are barely hanging on after such a short season.

When will the Premier make a real long-term commitment to horse racing in Sudbury and end the endless talk and piecemeal promises?

1130

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think putting \$180 million in place for a transition period for three years is a pretty concrete indication of where we want to go. There was horse racing across the province at all of the tracks.

The panel's plan will be based on principles of accountability, transparency, a renewed focus on the customer and positive return on investment to the taxpayers of Ontario. That's what the plan will include. So—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's over the top.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, it is. It is.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: All of the tracks that participated in the transition funding, and will participate, have to put forward a business plan. We'll work with all of the tracks that are able to do that as we go forward.

I have said quite clearly to the panel that I want a five-year strategy so that we can go through those five years, implement the recommendations and then review at the end of the five years. We want this industry to be sustainable.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food.

My riding is made up of both urban and rural areas, from the farmers' market at Orléans' Centrum Plaza, a bustling shopping area, to the Deloitte Farm, which has been in the family for over five generations.

We know that farmers feed cities and are an integral part of the \$34-billion agri-food industry, but if Ontario's industry is going to grow, flourish and continue to compete internationally, more needs to be done by both government and industry.

I attended the Premier's annual food summit with agri-food industry leaders this morning. The Premier issued a challenge to them. Could the Premier please inform the House of the challenge she made?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the member for Ottawa-Orléans for his question. So many of the ridings in Ontario that are represented by members in this House are both rural and urban and suburban. They're not one or the other, and it really reinforces my perception of the province that we're one Ontario, that we don't

have these mythical divides between rural and urban, that that's not real.

I was so pleased to be able to go to and to host the ninth Premier's Agri-Food Summit, with people from around the province. I believe that Ontario is filled with promise. I believe that the agri-food sector can grow. If we have some clarity of goals—we need to align our efforts, and we need partnership and collaboration—we will be able to grow that \$34-billion industry into at least a leader in the country and in North America.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Again, my question is to the Premier and Minister of Agriculture and Food. People in my riding will be excited to hear about the ambitious agenda our government is setting for the agri-food industry. The challenge the Premier issued this morning will provide ample opportunity for the sector to invest in the community, which will lead to jobs and economic growth. This government is committed to investing in people and businesses alike.

Mr. Speaker, through you: Could the Premier please elaborate on the challenge and what it will mean for agricultural business in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I said to the agri-food industry this morning was that I'm challenging that sector to double its growth rate and create more than 120,000 new jobs by 2020.

We've looked at the existing targets, and we believe that if we can push those targets, then we can create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. The reason that I believe this is possible is, as I travel the province and as I visit individual industries and farms, I hear about those individual capacities to grow. So if we've got thousands of farms across the province, thousands of industries that can grow a little bit, we can aggregate that, and we can create 120,000 new jobs by 2020.

The targets are being discussed today by the people who are participating in the agri-food summit, and we're going to get some feedback from them. I believe that in collaboration with the sector, we can meet those targets.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. You may not know this, Premier, but we share an anniversary. Two years ago yesterday, on the same day I was elected the MPP for Cambridge, your seat-saver program became a rousing success for the Liberal Party. Unfortunately, your calculated move left all Ontarians cynical, after spending hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money to win an election.

Since I've arrived here, the culture has not changed. After sitting in estimates last year, prying to get answers out of the then Minister of Energy, we now sit in the estimates committee, prying to get answers out of the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games.

In fact, under your government, nothing has changed. You stood by the Liberal scandals at eHealth and Ornge, and after a central role in the gas plant scandal and now

the Pan Am scandal, the Wynne government could have more scandals than the McGuinty government.

Premier, what have you done to ensure that next year's estimates committee won't be another dog-and-pony show with yet another minister evading questions on your next scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I go back to my comments about the justice committee. In fairness, the justice committee was asked to look at the matter that emanated from the prima facie finding of privilege, but it was also asked to look at very important matters about the siting of gas plants in the province of Ontario. Many of the Liberal witnesses who have been called have been experts in the field—to give good advice to the committee so that they can write a report which will benefit our government and future governments.

As has been said in this Legislature, we got 17 right and we made two mistakes, but the opposition—all they are doing is engaging in gotcha politics.

As I say, they brought me in front of the committee. I'm still not sure why. They asked ridiculous questions about documents that I had not seen and meetings that I had not attended, which they even admitted I had not seen or not attended.

If we could ask the legislative committees to do their work, it would benefit all of us in this Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Premier, how is it that you haven't actually sat down and talked to your House leader about accountability in your government, to get on the same page? Your main spokesman for your scandal-plagued government can't duck responsibility at every turn, all while you pretend to be open and accountable for all. This good-cop/bad-cop routine is a little worn out at this point.

Accountability is demonstrated through action, not conversation. So when the price tag on your seat-saver scandal is revealed tomorrow in a report that you refuse to read, you're going to have to make some wholesale changes on that side of the aisle. Can we count on the Premier to show us what real accountability looks like tomorrow rather than just going through the motions while the cameras are on?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we are going to see real accountability tomorrow because it was this Premier who asked for the Auditor General to undertake that report. It was this Premier who suggested a select committee to look into this matter, but the opposition refused because they wanted to go on a witch hunt on a respected member of this Legislature who has since retired from politics.

If the honourable member wants to talk about anniversaries, it was Saturday, October 5 when his leader went on YouTube and said that if he was elected leader of this province, the Mississauga plant would be "done, done, done."

You want to talk about accountability. Mr. Speaker, they have a lot of answers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I've asked that that stop and it's going to. New question?

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education. Today, there are new reports that more Ontario children have been exposed to health and safety hazards at unlicensed home daycares, including rodent infestations and unsanitary conditions at daycares in Oakville and Burlington. Apparently, the Ministry of Education was alerted to these risks by city officials, but it took no action—no visits, no inspections, no fines.

Children from Ottawa, Vaughan and Toronto have already died at unlicensed home daycares. Why is the Liberal government continuing to allow the health of children at unlicensed home daycares to be at risk?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to respond to the question. Speaker, I think we need to make it clear that since January of this year, when the Ministry of Education has received a complaint, it has followed up on that complaint—when there is a complaint about daycare. In fact, what sometimes happens is that there is some confusion around whether it's a public health complaint, in which case we would refer the complaint back to public health, because, in fact, the Ministry of Education has no authority to deal with public health complaints.

Where it is an education complaint, we have responded to every single one of those and, with one exception, it has nothing to do with this. But it is true that we need to refine the protocols between the two—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: The government has known about the lack of safety at unlicensed home daycares for years, yet today parents still can't get information about past complaints at these daycares. The Ministry of Education doesn't track results of public health reports on unlicensed home daycares or complaints to children's aid, animal control or fire and police services. The ministry doesn't inspect unlicensed daycares, and it does nothing to enforce health and safety violations.

When will the government stop reviewing the situation and start taking action so that parents who drop their children at home-based daycares each day know their kids are safe?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Speaker, it seems to me that if there is a complaint that falls under the authority of children's aid, parents would want an experienced children's aid caseworker looking into that. It seems to me that where there is a health and safety complaint, you would want to have a public health inspector looking into a health and safety complaint. Absolutely, we need to refine the protocols. In fact, in many cases, my ministry would be unaware of those complaints because, in fact, they don't come to the Ministry of Education. Where there is a ministry complaint, we are now following up on those scrupulously.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my great pleasure to inform the House today that during a ceremony held last Friday, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, elevated Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Chris Lewis to the rank of commander within the Order of Merit of the Police Forces.

The primary focus of the Order of Merit is on exceptional merit, contributions to policing and community development—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As important as that is as an announcement, it's not a point of order at this particular moment. I would ask the minister to just make her point or else I'm going to ask her to make this as a ministerial statement.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I will. I wanted to say that the commissioner of the OPP is the first Canadian police leader to have been elevated through all three levels of the Order—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kitchener—Conestoga on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd just like to wish my seat-mate, the member from Prince Edward—Hastings, a happy 43rd birthday today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That, too, was not a point of order, but it was a lot shorter.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: We'd all like to congratulate Commissioner Lewis. Why don't you make it a member's statement—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That, too, is not a point of order.

Let's just stop. I'm going to ask that a briefing be provided to all House leaders on the process of points of order with regard to these kinds of things. We need to make sure that we're—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hang on. I'm trying to make a point here without the interruptions. This is important. It's part of the decorum of this place, as well, and it doesn't require us to heckle when somebody is trying to make a point that should be somewhere else. So let's calm down.

There are no further debates. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DONALD LOW

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to recognize Ontario Agriculture Week and the contributions of our farmers. But if the Local Food Act isn't changed, this will be the last one. Ontario Agriculture Week is a celebration of the many things that we grow in Ontario, but it is more than that. It's a celebration of agriculture's contribution to our economy and the many jobs it creates. It's a time to recognize that our farmers are stewards of the land and work to protect our environment. It's a time to recognize the farmers who are always willing to help those in need.

They demonstrated that last winter, as some farmers struggled to feed their livestock following a devastating drought. Farmers came together and raised money to help those in need and bring in hay from the west. We have seen it through the contributions of Ontario Pork, the Holland Marsh Growers' Association and the many others who give generously to our food banks.

Ontario Agriculture Week is a time to recognize what all our farmers mean to Ontario. Today, more than ever, Ontarians are aware of local food and want to choose Ontario. Now is the time for us to ensure that they can. It's a time to look at what we can do to make local abattoirs sustainable. It's a time for this government to address the challenges our farmers are facing and to show respect for rural Ontario. It's a time for us to make the changes necessary to the Local Food Act that will actually have an impact on our food system so that we can continue to celebrate Ontario Agriculture Week.

JOHN GREYSON
AND TAREK LOUBANI

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Along with many others, I was relieved yesterday to hear about the release of John Greyson and Dr. Tarek Loubani. John is one of Canada's most celebrated filmmakers. He also lives in my riding and has made enormous contributions to Trinity-Spadina. So when I learned, seven weeks ago, that he and Tarek had been arrested in Egypt, I was horrified. It seems they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. No evidence was ever presented against them, and they were never charged with any crime. For seven weeks, they were held in brutal conditions. They must have felt so isolated and alone, but their families, friends and neighbours never gave up fighting for their release.

The campaign to free John and Tarek was visible everywhere. They showed that Canadians would not forget about John and Tarek and will not stop campaigning until they are safely back home.

John and Tarek are out of prison, but they have not been allowed to leave Egypt. The Canadian government says the delay is just a matter of filling out paperwork. I hope this is true. It's time to welcome John Greyson and Tarek Loubani home.

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to remember and pay tribute to Dr. Donald Low, the face of Ontario's response to the 2003 SARS outbreak, who passed away on September 18 at the age of 68 from a brain tumour.

Dr. Low was a native of Winnipeg who served as the chief biologist at Mount Sinai Hospital. He wrote books and articles for scientific journals and was a mentor. He worked on infectious diseases and was an early champion of the need to combat antibiotic resistance.

But most Ontarians remember Dr. Low's heroic calm during the SARS outbreak in 2003. As you know, Mr. Speaker, over 44 people died during the outbreak and more than 27,000 people were quarantined around the GTA. Dr. Low worked heroic long hours over many weeks and appeared frequently in newspapers and on TV to reassure the population of Ontario. He had the ability to explain very complex medical terms in a very sincere and understandable way.

During this crisis, we owed Dr. Low an incredible debt of gratitude. He probably saved thousands of lives, and these are the kinds of heroes we should recognize. Dr. Low is truly an Ontario hero and we want to pass on condolences to Dr. Low's children and his wife, Maureen, for his heroic contribution to this province in this time of need.

MARINE PERMITS

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to address a growing concern to many marine business and waterfront property owners in my riding. I hope that the Minister of Natural Resources is listening. Ontario's endless list of rules and regulations is a big reason why our province is falling behind. In a riding like Leeds-Grenville with so much waterfront, this red tape grows like nowhere else. You must wade through the stuff forever just to install a dock or build a deck. Heaven help us if you're really trying to grow your business.

But it's not just the red tape. The problem I'm raising today is what happens when a property owner or marine contractor finally jumps through that last hoop, and too often when it comes to the MNR office in Kemptville, what happens is nothing. I truly believe that somewhere in that bunker of an office there's a desk where permanent applications go to die.

One file my office is dealing with on behalf of the Ivy Lea Marina has been stuck on that desk since July. After all that wasted time, the only commitment local MNR staff will make is to sign off on it sometime this month so it can be pushed to yet another desk. That means another lost construction season for that business. It's unacceptable, and as I said, I hope the minister is listening. I'm asking him to pick up the phone and demand his staff do better.

ACTRA CONFERENCE AND ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH CENTENNIAL

Mr. Paul Miller: Last week, I had the opportunity to join the discussion at ACTRA Toronto's fall conference about the importance of protecting young performers. It was an excellent opportunity to hear from the parents of child actors about the need for increased regulations and support. I also had the chance to speak about Bill 71, the Protecting Child Performers Act, and where it currently stands in the legislative process. The response I received was overwhelming. We discussed work environment, health and safety, and tutoring, among other areas which Bill 71 will help regulate. The parents told me about how important the bill is for protecting the rights of child performers and the need for its immediate passage. I would like to thank ACTRA for inviting me to attend and allowing me to participate in the discussion. I look forward to celebrating with you when Bill 71 becomes law. A special thanks to Equity for their input and continued support.

Finally, St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church in my riding will be celebrating their 100th anniversary this weekend. The church will be hosting a weekend filled with events promoting faith, heritage and community. I ask you that you all join in congratulating St. Nicholas church on reaching such a tremendous milestone. I look forward to attending their centennial celebrations this weekend.

SIEMENS CANADA

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise in the House today to tell you some great news about the grand opening of the Siemens head office in Oakville that I was able to attend on September 19. I'm so proud that Oakville's highly educated and skilled workforce, along with strong market conditions, have made Oakville such an attractive location for leading companies such as Siemens to invest in.

As you know, Speaker, Siemens celebrated their 100th anniversary in August 2012 by announcing the opening of this new head office. Having a company with such an immense pool of knowledge and innovation on sustainable towns and cities can only help Oakville, and Ontario, continue to be a world-class place.

As a government, we've worked hard to strengthen the fundamentals of our economy: a competitive tax system, strategic and record investments in infrastructure, one of the best-educated and -trained workforces in the entire world and a deep and passionate commitment to innovation. Siemens' investments in new Ontario-based production facilities focus on the smart grid and clean energy. They're going to create new opportunities for us to be able to work together and to help build that next-generation economy that we all strive for.

On behalf of all the members of my community in Oakville, I'm really proud to welcome Siemens, such a world-class company, to the neighbourhood.

LIONS CLUBS

Mr. John Yakubski: I was honoured on Saturday evening to join members of the Killaloe and Area Lions Club, as well as visiting Lions members from all throughout eastern Ontario to celebrate the 65th anniversary of their Charter Night with the members and dignitaries from the area.

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The village of Killaloe and the surrounding area—the footprints and fingerprints of the Lions Club are all over that area. If there's a worthwhile project of some note, then the Lions Club has had some involvement in it over the past 65 years. Each and every one of our communities throughout this great province can attest to the work of Lions or other service clubs and how they have made their communities better places to live. I want to thank the members of the Killaloe and area Lions Club for the continued commitment they have made to their communities and the people who live in them.

Also, I want to commemorate the vision of their predecessors, who, 65 years ago, felt that a Lions Club would be beneficial to the people of Killaloe. How right they were. The Renfrew Lions Club sponsored Killaloe, and the charter was granted on June 12, 1948.

I want to congratulate everyone involved, thank the communities for their support and hope that the Killaloe and area Lions Club will be doing its great work for decades to come to benefit the people in the Killaloe area and, by extension, all the citizens of Ontario.

POPE JOHN PAUL II

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Pope John Paul II will be made a saint on April 27, 2014, the first Sunday after Easter, a feast day established by John Paul himself. He is credited with curing a Costa Rican woman with a severe brain injury and healing a French nun of Parkinson's disease.

Blessed John Paul, the first non-Italian pope for more than 400 years, is one of the 20th century's most influential leaders. He led the Catholic Church from 1978 to 2005. As a fierce critic of communism, he is credited with helping inspire opposition to communist rule in Eastern Europe, including in his native country, Poland.

He was the spiritual inspiration guiding the peaceful revolution of the Polish people, and his pious leadership led to the collapse of communism. The founder of Solidarity credited the pope with giving Poles the courage to rise up and stand for their rights.

No other pope of the modern era has had a greater spiritual and political impact. He won the hearts of millions, and his lasting message to the world is one of courage and faith.

Wouldn't it be nice if my private member's bill, which aims to proclaim April 2 of each year Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario, could be done in time for him to become a saint?

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise, on behalf of the Ontario PC Party, to give praise to our province's teachers. With October 5 being recognized as World Teachers' Day, I want to take a moment to thank all Ontario teachers for guiding, inspiring and nurturing the natural curiosity of the next generation. It is perhaps fitting that World Teachers' Day fell on a Saturday, as a day off is well deserved for the all the care, hard work and effort our province's teachers put in.

Certainly, if we all reflect on our years in school, it won't take long before we are fondly thinking about a teacher who left an invaluable impression on us. They may have been a little hard on us, moulded us, challenged us to improve on what we thought was our best, or demonstrated compassion, understanding and support when we needed it most. More often than not, it was a little bit of each.

As education critic for the Ontario PC Party and as a father, I'm proud of the work our teachers do each and every day. It is vitally important that we, as a province, find a way to ensure that our best and brightest teachers are in the front of our classrooms, where they belong.

Today, please think about a teacher who made your life better, and if you can, send them a thank-you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements, and I want to correct the record. I made a mistake this morning, and I want to correct that. I indicated to the member for Leeds–Grenville that he did not have a point of order. He did have a point of order. I apologize to the member. I have dealt with the issue, and I believe I have the Clerk's understanding that she will be speaking to the House leaders on that particular issue.

CHRIS LEWIS

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate your ruling.

I believe that Commissioner Lewis deserves the respect of all members of this House, and I would ask for unanimous consent that sometime this week all three parties have the opportunity of up to five minutes to pay tribute to Commissioner Lewis and recognize his raising to the rank of Commander of the Order of Merit of the Police Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Leeds–Grenville is seeking unanimous consent that, sometime this week—may I preface that by indicating, through the discussion of the House leaders?

Mr. Steve Clark: Correct.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac):—come to the conclusion that, by the end of this week, up to five min-

utes be allotted to each party to bring tribute to Commander Lewis. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Also in the House is a guest from the riding of Brant. I'm cheating a little bit myself. Chief Bryan LaForme, Chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation, is here with us today. Thank you, Chief.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

COMPREHENSIVE PAY
FAIRNESS ACT, 2013LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ
SALARIALE GLOBALE

Mr. Barrett moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to promote fairness in all compensation paid to employees in the public sector as compared to the private sector and to address Ontario's debt through alternatives to public sector layoffs and government program cuts while reducing the fiscal pressure on the people of Ontario who are having trouble paying their bills/ Projet de loi 113, Loi visant à promouvoir l'équité en ce qui concerne la rémunération versée aux employés du secteur public par rapport à celle des employés du secteur privé et à s'attaquer à la dette de l'Ontario sans recourir à des mises à pied dans le secteur public et à des compressions dans les programmes gouvernementaux tout en allégeant le fardeau financier des Ontariennes et des Ontariens qui peinent à payer leurs factures.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do you agree? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker. It does have a short title: the Comprehensive Pay Fairness Act, 2013.

This is a bill that enacts a new act to establish a division within the Ministry of Finance to be known as the comprehensive pay fairness division. This division is required to collect and publish information relating to the settling of all or part of the compensation paid to public sector employees. The information is to include comparisons between the terms and conditions of employment of public sector employees with those of private sector employees.

For that purpose, the Ministry of Finance is authorized to collect information about the terms and conditions of employment, including compensation, of both public sector employees and private sector employees. When making a decision or awards settling all or part of a collective agreement for public sector employees, an arbitra-

tor or a board of arbitration is required to consider the information that the division publishes.

MOTIONS

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding late shows.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is looking for unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the late show requested by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk directed to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs scheduled for Tuesday, October 8, 2013, be rescheduled to 6 p.m. on Wednesday, October 9, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader seeks unanimous consent to delay a late show to Wednesday, October 9 at 6 p.m. regarding the member from Haldimand–Norfolk in his question to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

Hon. David Zimmer: I rise in the Legislature today, on the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, to acknowledge that October 7 marks an important moment in Ontario's history. It's the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. As you've already introduced him, Speaker, I am pleased to be joined by Chief Bryan LaForme of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, who's standing here, and I'm also joined by Mr. Scott Cavan from the Six Nations, who, coincidentally, is the communications adviser at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs.

While there are differing views on the royal proclamation, it is certainly considered one of the foundational documents in the relationship between First Nations and the crown and therefore between First Nations and all Ontarians. The proclamation, signed by King George III 250 years ago today, was a turning point in the recognition and protection of aboriginal rights in Canada, rights that are now enshrined in Canada's Constitution.

The king proclaimed that all newcomers could not settle the land until the crown had first acquired the land from the First Nations who occupied the land. The principles that the king set out further developed and formalized the ground rules for treaty-making across what is now Canada. In Ontario, this revitalized process

began the very next year with the Treaty of Niagara and continues to this day.

Treaties formalize a relationship between the crown and First Nations based on the principle of trust and mutual respect. We may not always share the same ideas about treaty implementation, but we are all confident that our government, through respectful and meaningful dialogue, will continue to work with First Nation partners to reach greater clarity.

To this end, I can tell you that my ministry is working with our partners on a number of fronts to encourage dialogue on treaty rights and implementation. On Manitoulin Island today and tomorrow, for instance, we are supporting a land and treaty conference hosted by the United Chiefs and Councils of Mnidoo Mniwing. The conference will explore First Nation perspectives on treaty rights and responsibilities as well as the duty to consult, and crown First Nation relations.

Ontario will be participating in the Indigenous Bar Association's conference beginning today and running through Wednesday on the Chippewas of Rama First Nation, which will reflect on and mark the royal proclamation's anniversary.

In July of this year, the Archives of Ontario and the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs brought the original Treaty 9 parchment up to James Bay for the first time since the treaty was negotiated in 1905. That was a part of a community treaty conference hosted by the Mushkegowuk Tribal Council.

Members of this cabinet, including the Premier, have visited the far reaches of the province to foster stronger ties with tribal councils, provincial territorial organizations and First Nations communities, from Akwesasne in the east on the St. Lawrence to Fort Severn at the very northern part of Hudson Bay.

Though treaties were made throughout the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, they continue to be as relevant to the people of Ontario today as they were the day they were signed. Awareness of treaties and their continued importance is not at the level that it should be. Many Ontarians do not realize that they are very likely living in an area covered by a treaty. To raise awareness, my ministry has developed a map of the various treaties across Ontario. It is the first detailed map of the treaties covering Ontario that the province has published since the early 1940s. The Premier has asked that we provide a copy of the map to all Ontario schools this fall.

This government is engaged in present-day treaty-making right now in the 21st century. In the coming months, we expect the Algonquins of Ontario to vote on a draft agreement in principle to settle a claim first made in 1772. If ratified, negotiations and consultations will continue jointly among the Algonquins, Ontario and Canada toward a final agreement.

A final agreement will create a better environment for investment, stronger relationships among communities in eastern Ontario and long-awaited recognition for the Algonquin community. A final agreement will represent

Ontario's first modern-day, constitutionally protected treaty.

Mr. Speaker, as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, we recognize the need to continue strengthening the relationship between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people. Working together as one Ontario, we are making progress in many areas.

In the past 10 years, we have settled land claims at almost twice the pace of the previous 20 years. Our new relationship fund is investing in aboriginal communities and organizations to help build capacity, work with government and the private sector to pursue strategic projects, and enter into partnerships that connect and benefit aboriginal and non-aboriginal Ontarians alike. This government has made significant investments in aboriginal education, housing and health programs, to ensure that aboriginal Ontarians have the same opportunities as everyone else in Ontario.

Next year marks the 250th anniversary of the treaty of Niagara, which renewed the Covenant Chain alliance between the crown and First Nations of northeastern North America. As we look forward to working with First Nations to commemorate the treaty of Niagara, I encourage all Ontarians to take a moment today, and in the coming months, to learn more about the Royal Proclamation and the treaties in Ontario.

Ontario as we know it would not exist without treaties or the generosity and continuing contributions of our first peoples. Today, the future prosperity of our province is dependent on the full participation of all Ontarians, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Only in this way can Ontario be the fair and just society it aspires to be. Whether you are First Nation; whether you are Métis; whether you are Inuit; whether you live in a rural, urban or remote part of Ontario; whether your family has been here many generations or you are new to the province, we are one Ontario.

Thank you. Meegwetich.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? Last call for statements by ministries.

It is now time for responses.

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to represent the PC caucus and leader Tim Hudak to mark the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation. I, too, would like to welcome to the Legislature Chief Bryan LaForme, chief of the Mississaugas of the New Credit, and also Scott Cavan, who are here today.

Mr. Speaker, this is truly an historic day. It was on October 7, 250 years ago, that the Royal Proclamation was signed. That was at the end of the Seven Years' War—known, of course, for Wolfe and Montcalm and the French and English—and it really has become the foundation of the crown's relationship with First Nations. It was signed by King George III.

The proclamation recognized and protected aboriginal rights in Canada, which have, since 1982, been enshrined in the Canadian Constitution, and has really become the ground rules for treaty-making across Canada—truly an important document.

Mr. Speaker, there's so much history. This is my second time around as aboriginal affairs critic. I will say, there is no shortage of things to learn, particularly history.

Just a couple of days ago, it was the 200th anniversary of Tecumseh's death, another important anniversary; I note there is an essay that has just recently come out, written by Allan Gregg, with lots of good information about that.

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Coming up in the not-too-distant future, we have Louis Riel Day on November 16 as well, with some more history. In my first time as aboriginal affairs critic—the minister was mentioning that Treaty 9 was taken back up to some of the First Nations. I had the pleasure of flying myself up to Mishkeegogamang for the 100th anniversary of the signing of James Bay Treaty 9.

In the learning process that I consider part of this job, I also spent a day with then-Grand Chief Stan Beardy, and chartered a plane and flew—which is the only way to get there—up to Fort Severn and had meetings with the chief and council there. Then it was on to Webequie, which of course is right in the thick of the Ring of Fire. I spent a day doing that—again, learning.

In mentioning the Ring of Fire, I certainly note that there's lots of work there to make the Ring of Fire a reality. I'm pleased that I'm northern critic and aboriginal affairs critic, because I think that with a development like the Ring of Fire, it should be the aboriginal communities, the First Nations communities, that benefit the most from that development. Certainly on this side of the House, we want to see it progress and see those benefits start to accrue.

Mr. Speaker, I should say I would like to be in the riding today, but of course need to be here at Queen's Park. I say that because there are some important events happening there in Parry Sound–Muskoka today. My federal member has the federal aboriginal caucus chair in Parry Sound, and he's hosting round table discussions with the seven First Nations in Parry Sound–Muskoka, those being Moose Deer Point First Nation, Dokis First Nation, Henvey Inlet First Nation, Magnetawan First Nation, Shawanaga First Nation and Wahta, as well as Wasauksing First Nation. Today, they will also be opening a new nursing station in Moose Deer Point First Nation. As much as I like being here at Queen's Park, I'm kind of missing out on some things that I would like to be able to partake in as well as learn from in my own riding today.

In conclusion, this is a historic day. There's lots to learn, as the minister said, from the Royal Proclamation. I think we can all take some time and read about it and learn more about it. It would be good for all of us.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond. Thank you, and meegwetich.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to address the House to talk about the 250th anniversary of the Royal Proclamation.

I wish this would be an anniversary, but I say we are a long way from that. We certainly mark the date, but there is very little to celebrate when you look at the status of First Nations. I can speak for my riding and for all of the province.

I would, though, take the opportunity to congratulate my friends at Mattagami First Nation, Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and my friends at Bisco who were here to visit Queen's Park not that long ago for this important anniversary, the 250th anniversary of the signing of the treaty where First Nations were recognized as a nation.

You figure that during those 250 years, we would have learned that negotiations, nation to nation, have to be taken seriously. But unfortunately, 250 years later, we continue to see that First Nations' rights are not being respected; that whenever they try to stand up for their rights, it ends up in court; it ends up with tons of delays.

For anybody down in Toronto or in and around southern Ontario, if you have never been to a fly-in-only First Nations community in northern Ontario, please do so. Once you get there, you won't believe you are in Ontario anymore because the amount of poverty that you will see. The amount of struggles that people living in First Nations have to go through is nothing to be proud of and nothing to be celebrated—kids going to schools in shacks that frankly we wouldn't even use as hunting grounds where I'm from, and I live in the north. You look at the houses they have to live in and the crowded conditions they live in, and then you wonder why we have so many problems. Well, try to live 15 people in a two-bedroom house, and you will find out pretty soon why you have social problems: because you get on each other's nerves like you can't believe. Everybody is a human being, and at the end of the day, you need your own space, and we can't even afford them that.

The First Nations in my riding—particularly Atikameksheng Anishnawbek is a very progressive First Nation. They have a chief, Steve Miller, who is very progressive, who has progressive band members around him who really try to make things better. When you give them the respect to stand their ground as a nation, they flourish and they do very well.

We have a brand new subdivision at Atikameksheng Anishnawbek. You may know Holmes on Homes, Mike Holmes, who has the big TV show. He's building a new subdivision. He has done this in a way that is just fantastic. I remember, when he first came to my community, he brought planters for the kids. All of the little kids had little planters, and the bigger ones were to grow shrubs so that once the houses are all built, the kids are going to be responsible for the landscaping of those new homes. They are doing this in a way that is very much respectful of the way who the people in Atikameksheng Anishnawbek want to live their lives and want everybody to prosper and share in that prosperity.

They are close enough to Sudbury that a lot of their members work at the mines and work everywhere else that people in Sudbury work—in forestry or in retail and everything else.

But they continue to have their powwow. I invite you to come and see their powwow. It's the third weekend of August. If you've never been to one, it will really blow you away. It is a moving experience that is worth seeing first-hand.

It is an anniversary today: 250th anniversary. I wish that we would resolve together to do better. When I look at the United Nations, which comes and looks at the north of Ontario and then shows the world the destitute conditions that the people of the First Nations live in, it saddens me to no end. But at the same time, I think it should bring all of us together to say we can do better. We will do better. We will respect our treaties.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to offer a petition on behalf of my constituents.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I support this, will affix my signature and send it with the outstanding page Kyle from Huron—Bruce.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas buying a condominium home is one of the most significant purchases a person can make; and

"Whereas currently the purchasers and owners of condominium homes are not properly protected under the laws of Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To adopt the Property Owners Protection Act which will:

"Provide condominium owners with a number of protective measures including a low-cost dispute review board as an alternative to court action against developers;

"End developer control of the Taron board that is supposed to protect consumers who have warranty problems;

"Extend warranties to five years; and

"Require good-faith language in the declaration so that the developers' promises at time of sale are carried through in construction."

I support this petition, I sign it and I give it to page Megan to table.

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CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas cellular communications towers are proposed to be built in the vicinity of Bronte in Oakville;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications towers under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell towers;

"Whereas the town of Oakville has very limited jurisdiction in the placement of cellular towers;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the proposed location and proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada grant municipalities the right to have enhanced participation in the placement of cellular communications towers in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the construction of cellular towers within 500 metres of residential homes until the implementation of an improved municipal approval process."

I agree with this and will sign it, Speaker, and send it to you with page Daniel.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes"—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Health is complaining. She can correct this if she wishes.

"Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide 5 to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site;"—get the taxi—"and

"Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment); and

"Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

"Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and fall risks;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments, if medically necessary, with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Taylor, one of the pages, on their last week here at Queen's Park.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is" the only province in Canada "where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask my good page Kieva to bring it to the Clerk.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24; and

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces; and

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75; and

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to James.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to add my name to the thousands and give it to Katherine to be delivered to the table.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Pratah.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: "Whereas the Ontario government" has made PET scanning "a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

"Whereas," since October 2009, "insured PET scans" are "performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with" Health Sciences North, "its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through" Health Sciences North, "thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, Mr. Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask page Erica to bring it to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jim McDonell: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new,

computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.

I agree with this and will be passing it on to page Megan.

1350

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective" and cruel "approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

On behalf of the thousands of dogs that have been euthanized, I'm going to sign this and give it to Kieva to be delivered to the table.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

"Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

"Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and send it with page Peyton.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from in and around the Peterborough area, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for care;

"Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

"Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won't require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Erica to bring it to the Clerk.

FISHING AND HUNTING REGULATIONS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm reading this on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham because a couple of them have gone on the bear hunt this week. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty/Wynne government has drastically reduced the number of Ontario hunting and fishing regulation booklets" usually "available to the public; and

"Whereas regulations in printed booklets are the most portable and convenient format for outdoorspersons to consult in the field, while hunting or fishing; and

"Whereas in addition to the Internet being unavailable in remote locations, many Ontarians do not have Internet access, or prefer information in print rather than electronic format; and

"Whereas those who hunt and fish pay substantial amounts each year to purchase outdoor cards, hunting licences and fishing licences and it is reasonable to expect that a booklet explaining the regulations should be provided as a courtesy; and

"Whereas Ontario hunters and anglers need to access the most current regulations to ensure they enjoy hunting and fishing safely and lawfully;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ministry of Natural Resources to respect the wishes of Ontario anglers and hunters by providing hunting and fishing regulations in a booklet format to everyone who needs one"—and when they need it.

I'm pleased to sign this and send it to the table with Ravicha.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 19, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was a little bit confused as to who was speaking, but I see that it is my turn. I appreciate, as always, the opportunity to rise in this House and debate the bills before us.

Today we have, yet again, Bill 60. It's a government bill entitled Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013. It's a bill that, I guess in the title, is pretty well self-descriptive; it deals with wireless services agreements in the province of Ontario. Who in this province isn't familiar with the complexity of wireless services agreements as we get closer and accept the use of cellphones in our everyday lives, as a constant, almost? I can't imagine that there is a member in this House that doesn't have a cellphone attached to their hip almost 24/7; I certainly do myself. Sometimes it becomes an annoyance, especially when I'm trying to hang out with my family, but it's certainly a part of our lives and it's an integral tool to be able to provide the services that we do as members to our constituencies.

That's just us in this House, to be able to relay information, but how has the cellphone industry and the proliferation of cellphones and the ability to connect wirelessly to the Internet—how has that change affected our province and our economy? Well, certainly it has opened up the doors to knowledge and information.

It was said that, in this day and age, in 2010, given the proliferation of cellphones and the access that people have with their cellphones, we today have more access to information on the spot than Bill Clinton did in his term as the president of the United States. He had to go through a lot of hoops to be able to get to the information that we now have easily on our phones and can access quite easily. Certainly, he knew things that we probably aren't privy to, and he was able to access that, but it's just in terms of sheer access to the Internet and to be able to retrieve that information is now almost universal.

That being said, with that access comes, of course, some need to regulate what we get, what we see and how we pay for it. This is what this bill attempts to do. I will say from the outset that my honourable colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton spoke at length—I believe he did an hour lead on this bill—and talked pretty eloquently about the redundancy of this bill through the provincial Legislature as it relates to what was done and has been done at the federal level.

Previous to the introduction of this bill, some protection, some regulation and governance through the CRTC was given to be able to keep tabs on what the wireless industry was doing and how we protect consumers. That's really, I think, what is at the heart of this bill: consumer protection. That's something that we all look to, and our constituents look to us to ensure that we are regulating and providing some oversight and transparency, especially in telecommunications and wireless.

The first aspect of this bill is that the provider is required to provide—"provider" being the wireless service provider; the ones that we know in this province are the big 3 of Telus, Rogers and Bell, and there are several others—clear written contracts that spell out which services come with the basic fee and which services would result in a higher bill. So, first is to provide clear language.

If you've ever signed a cellphone contract, first of all, you need a microscope. The font on those contracts is quite small; it's difficult for any person of any age to be able to read that fine print, and it is expansive. It deals with all of their regulatory regime. It deals with the rights and responsibilities. It would take you an hour or two hours and to retain a lawyer to be able to understand the complexities of cellphone contracts in this day and age.

I think it's welcome news to be able to provide some clear language in contracts, spelling out which services come with the basic fee—basic airtime, roaming packages, data packages, texting packages—but also enhanced fees that you might not know about. You might not even know that you are signing on to a whole host of other fees that you maybe might not need and maybe might not certainly understand. I look forward to seeing what that will be, and I look forward to actually reading it within my next contract.

I can tell you, Speaker, that over the summer I took a one-day trip to Philadelphia to visit some family. My wife and I flew out of Detroit Metro to Philadelphia. It was an hour-and-a-half-long flight. I think the flight cost us about \$180. I got to Philadelphia, opened up my phone, checked some of my emails and texted my cousin to pick us up at the airport. He drove us to his place in downtown Philly. We went, hung out—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Big mistake.

1400

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Pardon me?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Big mistake.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Big mistake? A \$900 mistake. Oui, madame, 900 \$ ça m'a coûté, pour juste ouvrir mon cellulaire.

My phone was—the roaming was on. I don't know. I thought, "Hey, I'm just checking my email." I wasn't watching videos or playing games. A text: "Pick me up." "Send me home." For that 24-hour trip it cost me more to turn the cellphone on than it did to fly to Philadelphia with my wife and return to Detroit.

Interjection: Shame.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Shame. Shame on me, I guess, for turning my cellphone on, but really, I wonder how many other cellphone users have come across this same scenario. Of course, my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, within his notes which I was reading, talks about some \$2,000 or \$3,000 bills, even one \$20,000 roaming charge. It would be ridiculous to think that someone could incur a \$20,000 fee for using their cellphone. It's beyond comprehension for me, and I think that's again, hopefully, what this bill intends to do.

In the sense that it is redundant, as the CRTC is now able, given the federal legislation that was passed in 2010, if I'm not mistaken—oh, no, I'm sorry. You know what? I am mistaken. The bill comes into effect in December of this year, so that's why I wasn't capped. Unfortunately, they are still able to. But the CRTC now has the ability, given the federal legislation, to cap as of December 2013. I think we all look forward to that level of protection.

What this bill does, at the provincial level, is give some remedy for cellphone users to be able to seek out compensation and to be rewarded compensation that is due through their contracts, meaning that if they've been overcharged, a user could appeal through Small Claims Court and receive up to three times the amount of the charge. In essence, if the refund is \$100, that cellphone user could ultimately get compensated to the tune of about \$300. This makes sense, because if you're going to fight a \$100 cellphone overpayment charge, given that you might have to take a day off to go to Small Claims Court, well, that's a day off of work, potentially. It might cost you more to fight that \$100 charge than it would to simply to let it go and then to switch providers.

Talking about switching providers, that's another component of this bill that I think is also covered at the federal level: the right to exit your contract within a one-year time frame. It's something that I think we've all been accustomed to: being locked into cellphone agreements that are three years in duration. I, personally, have been with my same provider for 10 or 12 years now—one of the reasons, I think, why I was able to successfully lobby my cellphone provider to lower that \$900 charge. So, madame, I was ultimately able to say, "This is a little bit ridiculous. I've never had a \$900 cellphone bill," and they did see my record. But we shouldn't have to go through those hoops anyway in the first place. So they were understanding that this is something that is abnormal, something that really shouldn't happen and something that, if they wanted to retain me as a customer for another 12 years, they had better deal with. I'm thankful that they did and I think I'll continue to be a loyal customer of my cellphone provider. But certainly I think

that for those who don't have the ability or don't have the understanding that they can fight, we need some hard protections and hard caps so that they don't get taken advantage of from the outset.

There are a couple of other components.

The consumer gets the ability to walk away from a contract at any time, with limits on cancellation fees that a service provider could provide, meaning that the limit on a cancellation fee isn't a percentage of your outstanding balance. It would be a cap of \$50, which I think is reasonable. Certainly, to be able to exit a contract that you know is uncompetitive—you see there are better deals out there—and shop around for your service provider is justified. I'll be looking forward to hearing some testimony from folks who are cellphone users who have some thoughts about the \$50 charge.

There's also the right to sue the provider for three times the amount—I had already covered that. Again, I think it's an important step to ensure some consumer protection—it could also act as a deterrent.

What we know, Mr. Speaker, is that the big three cellphone and wireless providers in this country are massive entities. They are multi-million-dollar, if not billion-dollar, corporations, that I'm sure would have nothing but the best legal representation and access to legal representation. And here's little old me, finding out I have a \$900 cellphone bill or, let's say, little old me being overcharged on my cellphone bill and wanting to fight that overcharge, going up against the big cellphone companies.

I see a commercial all the time on TV—I wonder if my colleagues see it every day, as well. It's my good friend, Belle River native Tie Domi, who is doing some promos for a cellphone company. Tie walks up and says, "Stand up to the big guy." Tie certainly is known for standing up to the big guy, being 5 foot 8. But we need somebody like Tie Domi on our side to stand up to the big guy. I think that's what this bill attempts to do.

My colleague—that's certainly not a prop. Is that Tie? There he is. He's a good guy, a great former Toronto Maple Leaf and certainly the pride of Belle River when it comes to hockey.

We do need someone standing on our side. What this bill doesn't do is provide an advocate or an ombudsman. I imagine that people would generally have to seek recourse through the office of consumer protection, but those guys are bombarded with various complaints outside of just cellphone contracts.

In terms of complaints, Mr. Speaker, in 2010 and 2011, the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services, the CCTS, received 8,007 complaints, which constituted a 114% increase over previous years. That's a significant increase. Of the complaints received, 62% were with respect to wireless companies and wireless contracts. I guess that ratio is indicative, again, of the proliferation of cellphones in our general, day-to-day activities.

Everyone has a cellphone. In fact, I think we're less reliant on land-based phones even more so. We certainly

don't see the amount of pay phones we used to see on street corners. I rarely use my home phone. I'm rarely home, but we rarely use our home phone as our primary source of communication. It's now strictly cellphones, and that covers the gamut from young people to seniors. My dad is a pretty good cellphone user. After we showed him how to answer it and hang it up, he eventually got the hang of it and now he can't get off the thing.

It's important for us to identify that this is one of the fastest-growing segments. It is an important segment of our economy and communications network. It's important, as my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton says, to give people access to a device that opens up the doors to knowledge. I think this government would be well-served if we looked at ways to do that, instead of redundant legislation that's already covered at the federal level. Nevertheless, here it is before us, and we'll deal with it and criticize it, but also try to point the government in a direction that might be more applicable and more well-serving of the time in this Legislature.

One aspect would be the increased need for high-speed Internet in our rural and northern communities. That's something we are not doing. We still have dial-up Internet in some areas of this province. I think we've all heard the squeaking and screeching and buzzing of a dial-up connection being made at the beginning, the dark ages of the Internet. We'd have to wait two minutes for it to load up and connect, and then we'd get our basic HTML websites loaded up and not much more than that. It would take a couple of minutes to load a page and, by that time, we could make breakfast, lunch and dinner—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Tea.

1410

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—have tea, go back, and the page would be loaded. Well, we're still in that era in some parts of this province, Mr. Speaker.

I wonder if the government—I know they know that. I know they acknowledge that that exists, but we still don't have a real strategy to ensure that this government is investing in access to high-speed Internet. It's one of the things that prosperous and progressive countries are doing and have done. The Scandinavian countries, I know, have put a heavy emphasis on the infrastructure needed to access high-speed Internet. What has that done? It has connected their country to government services. It has facilitated a democracy. It has also facilitated commerce and, ultimately, made them a more prosperous and progressive society. But it has also affected their level of productivity.

We are in the knowledge era, Mr. Speaker. We all know that, but if we don't have access to knowledge, quick and reliable access, then we're falling further and further behind. It's one thing to ensure that there's some level of protection for users of cellphones and access to wireless services, but it's another thing to actually see that as a vital and strategic resource really for our province, one that I think this government certainly could do more towards advancing.

The act really doesn't ultimately cover one of the biggest complaints that I hear in my office and in my riding of Essex: one of high cost. We are one of the highest-cost jurisdictions for wireless services and cellphone usage on the planet. There are some statistics that show that, on average, for a monthly term the average price that Canadians were paying in 2010, using the same dollar figures for voice, text and data plans, was \$67.50 a month. If we contrast that with countries like Hong Kong and India, where it's \$13.50 and \$12.90 respectively, we are getting gouged. That's something I don't see addressed within the context of Bill 60.

Maybe comparing us to Hong Kong and India is not so much an apples-to-apples comparison. Let's compare us to Denmark, which is a similar type of nation as we are; they're a developed country. Here we are: The Danes, on a similar plan, 250 minutes a month, where we are at \$38.70 in 2010, they pay about 17 bucks. What is it? How is it that they're able to control those prices so effectively? I don't know the specifics of what they're doing, but whatever they are doing, they're doing it right. It has aided in their economy and productivity and, of course, access to knowledge.

One of the things that I would like to see is a specific strategy, a wireless communications, a connectivity strategy, come out of this government. I think one is needed right now because, with every day that comes forward, every day that goes by, we are falling further and further behind, and other countries that have embarked on the high-speed wireless agenda are leaving us in the dust.

That's my time, Mr. Speaker. I truly appreciate the opportunity and look forward to comments from my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to respond to the comments from the member from Essex on Bill 60, which is the Wireless Services Agreements Act. This legislation would, if passed, create new rights and consumer protection for cellphone and wireless contract consumers.

I thought it was interesting that the member from Essex was talking about his experience with roaming charges, because I had cause to be in Sault Ste. Marie not too long ago, and somebody said something to me which I wouldn't have thought about, which was, "Be really careful about checking your cellphone and making sure it's not roaming because we're really close to the border here. If it can't pick up your provider's tower, it may just hop over the border and pick up some provider down in the US."

Now, fortunately, when I got home, I didn't have a big \$900 bill like the member from Essex. But this whole issue about roaming and acquiring roaming charges that you have no reason to anticipate and which are quite outrageous is a real problem for lots of consumers. You don't even need to leave the country to get into that problem. That's one of the areas where consumers absolutely need more protection.

But I think maybe the biggest thing is just making it clear to people what does your contract cover, what doesn't it cover and what is the total cost, because you often have all these hidden costs you don't know about with the way contracts are currently structured.

I hope that we will have support from all the members for this bill, and I look forward to hoping that we'll be able to vote on it fairly soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It was a pleasure to listen to the member from Essex. He brings a genuine commentary, telling about his own mistakes on roaming, as we all have in our 20 minutes. But I hope he's learned a lesson, because, fooling with government and wasting money like that, I'll start to think you're a Liberal.

On a serious level, I think really a lot is being said about very little. In fact, this is the second go-around. I want to thank Mr. Oraziotti for the work he's done on the bill and commend Ms. MacCharles because she's from Durham and she's a genuine person. It's protecting consumers, and I suspect that we'd all be in favour of that part.

I do think, if you delve down into it, you're going to find that this has been talked about for quite a long time. As I said, it was Bill 5 originally and now we're talking about this. So they've been delaying this for some unknown reason. I think they've been waiting for the federal government to take the steps which they have, and the CRTC code prevails whenever there is a conflict and which we don't need the bill to some extent.

If you look at this, it's really a case that—one thing that I've found in the explanatory notes is that it really does provide due notice, and that's a consumer protection provision in it. Disclosure, clear language, that sort of stuff is pretty straightforward. But the bully tactics they were using—not the government this time; well, they use bully tactics too—about the telephone providers was that they would actually—if you didn't pay the bill and they disconnected your service, you lost the number. Once you lost that number, you couldn't get it back. Many people, whether it's in business or in their personal lives, felt very close to that. As described, many people now throughout the world are using cellphones as the first order of their method of communications.

I think the member touched most of those points, and certainly I think this is about time that this bill went the way of the normal death of some bills or the birth of some bills.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to comment on the remarks made by my colleague the member from Essex. I have to say, the thought that you could get stuck with a \$900 bill for roaming is certainly a sobering reminder of some of the realities we deal with in these contracts. I think it's very useful that there's a requirement for plain language, I think it's useful that there's a cap on the cancellation fees for these contracts and I think it's useful that people

will be able to go after cellphone providers, mobile providers, when they overcharge. But I'm very concerned that it is going to be very difficult, if not impossible, for most people to take on Rogers or Telus or Bell when they have a dispute over their bill.

1420

I think it makes a lot of sense, and I believe it was mentioned by my colleague, that we need a consumer advocate who will work with consumers when they have to appeal a decision of one of these mobile telephone providers. There's no doubt that these mobile providers are making a large amount of money. The bills are quite substantial; we have an ongoing problem in Canada and Ontario with very high cellphone charges. There's no doubt at all, as my colleague said, that these companies will hire very capable legal assistance when it comes to fighting it out with a customer over the content of their bill.

I think it makes sense for us to proceed with this bill and to have committee hearings, but I'm hopeful that my colleague and my other associates will bring forward changes when this matter gets to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to rise today to talk about Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013. It's important also to know that we brought forward this legislation to protect Ontario consumers because we believe that consumers need, and continue to need, strong enforcement measures and enhanced remedies.

This act will oblige telephone companies to fully disclose their goods and services. They will have to provide and clearly explain which services are included and which would result in added costs. They will also have to have a comprehensive and easy-to-understand agreement, because the problem is often the fine print that you don't understand—you need a lawyer to explain it. Often, you also need a pair of glasses to read the fine print because you don't know what's written there.

It will also require companies to receive a consumer's consent if a fixed-term contract is to be amended, renewed or extended. I'm shocked to hear the member for Essex talking about roaming costs. A \$900 bill is just unbelievable. It should not be accepted in this day and age. I always thought that the CRTC was looking to protect the consumer in Canada, and yes, they announced a new national wireless code on June 3. But this code does not go far enough to protect Ontarians and Canadians. I hope we will speedily vote on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments for this round. I return to the member from Essex for his reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the Minister of Education and the Minister of Community Services and Correctional Services, as well as the member from Durham and my colleague from Toronto—Danforth for their comments.

Evidently, there is some need here. I went through it. Countless other people have gone through it inadvertently. You turn your cellphone on and you turn your cell off, and all of a sudden you've got a \$900 bill. To the member for Durham, I was able to successfully fight that bill. I think I paid what was owed, but not much more than that.

Of course, we hear these calls coming from constituents in our ridings every day. They feel as though here is another big company that's ripping them off, whether it's in insurance or cellphone bills. It's our job to be diligent and provide that protection. I think this takes a step toward that. I hope we have a good amount of submissions from the public to make sure we get it right and to make sure, as well, that we're actually looking proactively at technologies that are coming online. Again, the fact that we now do so much on these cellphones—financial transactions, massive amounts of data that is shared—is indicative of the fact that we are looking at this bill and need to make sure we get it right.

In terms of roaming charges, I live in Windsor, in Essex county, just bordering Detroit, Michigan. We border Lake Erie and Lake St. Clair. We can almost see cellphone towers on the other side of the lake. All of a sudden, you'll get a roaming charge just by being close to the water. I don't know how we'd put a wall up there, but it's certainly something that needs to be addressed. I don't know if we can do that through the context of this bill, but certainly, there are a lot of people who are in the same situation.

Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to begin by welcoming a group of young female students who are up in the gallery and their adult chaperones. This bill, Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, will no doubt have a huge impact on their lives. They are the generation that will be moving this next technology forward. We'd like to welcome them and also apologize that it won't quite be as entertaining as question period in the morning, but we'll do our best.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: You want us to start heckling?

Mr. Bill Walker: You can heckle, yes. That would add some entertainment.

It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device, and to represent the interests of my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, has some admirable objectives.

Cap cancellation fees to 10% of the remaining contract, or \$50: This makes sense.

Simplify contract language: We all know that that fine print behind—our colleague from down by Windsor got

caught in one of these things, I think, with that \$900 bill he was referencing.

Disclose hidden fees in contracts, including roaming charges: We're going to hear lots about that. Those are those things that can just scare people out of their shoes, when they turn it on inadvertently, like he advised he did and got a \$900 bill.

Allow the consumer to sue for owed refunds if not repaid swiftly: This is only appropriate. If you've paid more than you should, you should get that money. It's your money, and it should be done in a timely manner.

It lays out a framework for prosecuting wireless companies that break this law.

I'd like to thank my colleagues Jim McDonnell, the former critic, from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry; and our current critic, Toby Barrett, from Haldimand-Norfolk, for the great work they've done to bring me up to speed on this bill and to point out some thoughts and concerns that we might have with it.

Speaker, wireless consumers believe mostly that they're paying too much for their mobile services. I think that was referenced in some of the remarks earlier, that other countries have lower rates, and we want just to be treated in the same manner.

Obviously, we want to utilize this very important tool; it truly is a resource for all of us. Every person in my family—my two young sons, Zach and Ben, and my wife, Michaela, and myself—we all have cellphones. It's the modern way to communicate, and we need to do that in as cost-effective a manner as possible.

Those great pages sitting in front of you deserve that as well, because that is their way of life and is going to continue to be. We need to keep that to an affordable measure so that everyone, regardless of whether they're in a remote part of our province, they're in downtown Toronto or they're in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, has access to this great resource and tool.

I might put in a plug for BlackBerry, which I still believe is one of those visionary companies that brought us to where we are today. We need to do everything we can to retain that great technology that truly is Canadian.

Speaker, my folks at home, my constituents, are telling me they're frustrated with current service agreements that often leave them saddled with harsh fines for roaming and for breaking contracts early. Again, there's legalese by the page that very few people ever really understand, even if they do read it, and the next thing you know, they're hammered with some kind of a fee. They're trying to find a way to keep their costs down, because with this government that's in power now, there's costs all over the place, and revenue tools, I think they're now calling them—I still call them "taxes"—continue to increase. They need to continue to find ways to pay all of their bills, and certainly a mobile phone bill is a necessity in today's world.

They're right to be upset, these constituents and taxpayers. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD, North American consumers pay some of the highest mobile rates in the

world. We need to find a way to address that. We need to ensure that we have competitive rates, as we do with everything—I'll go off on a bit of a tangent here—like our electricity rates.

We used to be the leader in this province. We had the lowest rates, which encouraged companies to set up here in Ontario, to build and to expand here in Ontario. Today, most companies are leaving Ontario because we have the highest rates. In fact, by next year, I believe it's quoted that we'll have a highest energy rates in North America. That's shameful. It's not a good place for our province to be. Like these fees, we need to make sure that we're always competitive, that we're paying fair and decent rates.

Obviously, the big companies have to make money. That's the way the world goes around, and we're okay with that. But they have to be fair rates for the consumer.

The study compared data charges from the top two providers in each of the 30-something OECD countries. While Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden had the lowest prices for mobile users, at about \$130 in fees per year, the highest spending was found in Canada and the United States, at about \$500 for the year. These rates were back in 2009. Today, unfortunately, they're even higher.

I do believe, however, that the federal government is trying to take action on this to bring those rates down and they are having some success, so I am hopeful that they will have even more success in the near future.

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For these reasons, I support the key objectives of this bill. We need that detailed disclosure of goods and services and fees and contracts. It has to be plain, simple and concise language that anybody can understand.

We have a new page in our midst. Good to see you, Mr. Natyshak.

It needs to be plain language. Anybody that's entering into any contract—it used to be a handshake that we premised everything on; now we get into contracts. But in any case, we still need to have those as simple and clear as they are and as they can be.

We need a consumer's consent to amend, renew or extend fixed-term contracts, and thus a prohibition on automatic contract renewals for fixed-term agreements. I think this is what my colleague Mr. O'Toole was referencing, that when you lose that phone number, that's your lifeline. A lot of people spend a lot of money on their business, their business cards and their websites, and they have to change all of that, which has unintended costs that are fairly significant in places. If you lose that by an inadvertent contract detail and the company is not willing to work with you, then that can be an onerous responsibility.

There needs to be a right to cancel agreements at any time and a ban on charges for services that are not accessible where devices are being repaired.

These changes will provide the necessary protection to consumers, which is absolutely a key goal and one that I stand behind very much. It's a huge demographic in On-

tario; 80% of people have a mobile phone, and I would suggest that that is just going to continue to rise, because it really, truly is becoming the mode of communication—I can tell you that in my household, with my two sons, we almost never have a phone conversation. It's a text or an email or a BBM, and that's the way of the world. It's going to continue to go down that way, but we need to ensure that these devices are used as the tools and great communication resources that they are, and we need to make sure we have protections in place for those consumers so that it's a level playing field for all people.

I know that when I travel in northern Ontario, in a lot of cases there is no signal up there. Even in places within my riding, which isn't in the extreme north, but three hours north of here in the city, there are certainly still pockets at times where you can lose that, and that's just not acceptable. A lot of our services, like our ambulances, are utilizing that technology now, the wireless service, so you need to ensure that that is always there. Part of that is working with the industry to ensure that prices are low enough that everybody can have access and the services are there when we need them.

Similar protections are already in place for individuals and small businesses in neighbouring provinces such as Quebec, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Manitoba, so, again, why is Ontario lagging in this? Minister Orazietti brought this in, I believe, as Bill 5, and I spoke at that time. I believe most people in the House were in support of it. Now Minister MacCharles has brought it in. I just don't understand why this can't already be in place and we aren't actually engaged in the service protection that it implies we are going to have. We continue to stand here and talk about these things, and at the end of the day, I think we could have had this in place. The federal government has now done their part, and I think that we are sometimes just spinning the wheels just so the Liberals don't have to address the true mess they have made of this province.

More importantly, Canada's telecom regulator has made it easier for consumers to switch to wireless providers—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Which hospital does he want?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Markdale.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like a Markdale hospital. That's a good point, Minister.

Oh, you're telling me that if I keep saying these bad things, you're not going to give me a Markdale hospital? That's inappropriate, I think. That's not fair to the people of Markdale and area who put \$13 million in the bank for the new hospital.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Your members brought up the issue. I'm just wanting to have a good discussion about it. I'm going to fight every day I can to get the Markdale hospital, and I hope all three—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm afraid we're deviating somewhat from the subject of Bill 60. I

would ask the members to refrain from heckling the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and would return to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who has the floor.

Mr. Bill Walker: I apologize, Speaker. I just always want to address with my colleagues, when an important topic like the Markdale hospital comes up, that I can make sure they know that we are still pressing, and my constituents expect them to honour the commitment they made over 10 years ago to build a brand new Markdale hospital.

Having said that, I know the minister is very much on top of this file, and I appreciate her efforts. I am sure she will come through in the very near future with some kind of an announcement that that funding will be forthright.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: As soon as the election is called.

Mr. Bill Walker: As soon as the election? Well, I am hoping that will even come before the election. That would be the honourable thing to do. However, Speaker, I apologize and I will get back to the topic at hand.

Under the new rules governing wireless services, which kick in this December, consumers across Canada will be able to shop around for better deals after their two-year contract expires. In other words, the three-year contract is going to be gone and you will have lots more flexibility to be able to move when you need to. Your world changes, and sometimes your service provider makes changes, so we should have the flexibility to move around as we need to.

Of course, as I've said before, putting a cap on roaming or data charges: There is one in here, I think—well, I'm going to talk about it right now, in fact. There was a BC dad who returned from a family vacation in Mexico to find a \$22,000 bill from his wireless provider—\$22,000. That number is about the same debt a newborn child today is encumbered with by this Liberal government, which has ran our province into the ground with their debt program. So that number really jumps out at me. Speaker, can you imagine—can any of those pages sitting in front of you think of going home at the end of this week, when unfortunately we're going to lose them, and opening up an envelope that says, "You owe me \$22,000," after what's probably been like a vacation being here for five weeks with us? Is that not right, pages? It's been an absolute, great vacation?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Amortize it to the next generation.

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes, you have probably amortized it to my grandkids, unfortunately, the way you're running the province at this point. But we don't want to digress into all the challenges you guys have. I don't have that much time. I've only got about 10 minutes left. We can't solve your debt problems in 10 minutes, unless we become the government.

So \$22,000 in roaming charges. That's almost 10 times the cost of the actual trip for something they had no idea was even there. According to the new national wireless code, that should no longer happen. I would

suggest it should no longer happen; it cannot happen in future.

"If a customer cancels a contract before the end of the commitment period, the service provider must not charge the customer any fee or penalty other than the early cancellation fee...."

For fixed-term contracts, "The early cancellation fee must not exceed the value of the device subsidy. The early cancellation fee must be reduced by an equal amount each month, for the lesser of 24 months or the total number of months in the contract term, such that the early cancellation fee is reduced to \$0 by the end of the period."

For indeterminate contracts, "The early cancellation fee must not exceed the value of the device subsidy. The early cancellation fee must be reduced by an equal amount each month, over a maximum of 24 months, such that the early cancellation fee is reduced to \$0 by the end of the period."

As I've said right from the outset of my remarks today, these are all commendable changes and we welcome. After all, wireless rules should be covered by a national plan.

If one of my sons, Zach or Ben, decides at the end of the day that he's going to leave this province and move—with 600,000 people already unemployed, what are the prospects for them to find work in their time getting out of school? Unfortunately, they may have to leave this great province of ours, the leader of Confederation in the past, to go to another province. But if they choose to do that, it would be my expectation that they should be able to take the exact cellphone they have today with the exact plan they have today, and it should be a seamless transition. After all, the electronic world does remove borders.

So it would make sense to me that we should have a national plan, and we would leave it at the national level. In fact, that's going to be done by the end of this year, so it's a bit moot that we're even having this six-hour debate about something that, relatively, we all support and that could have been done the last time, had the government not prorogued Parliament and killed that bill on the order paper.

On that point, Speaker, it's important and worth noting that Ontario residents were promised these changes back in 2011. Unfortunately, the Liberals prorogued and effectively killed Bill 82. Not much needs to be said, Speaker. It could be in law. They keep bringing things back over and over again. Prior to that, it was Bill 5, as I referenced earlier, introduced by Minister Orazietti, MPP for Sault Ste. Marie.

While this is a good policy for Ontarians, I wonder how soon the government will make it a reality. The next budget is unfortunately not that far away. It's already starting to come at us, and we don't have a lot of time, because who knows what could happen at that point? We'd hate to see this go down yet again and have to bring it back for more duplication and waste.

In truth, we want this government and this Premier to focus on and prepare a jobs plan. Last week marked the 10th anniversary of the Liberal government in Ontario. This weekend, just yesterday, marked my and many of my colleagues—there were 16 new MPPs in the Conservative Party elected last time by the people in their ridings to serve them and their interests and needs. I have to say, it's an absolute pleasure and a privilege to have done that for the last two years. I can't think of a better honour to have, and I hope they're happy with my performance so far.

On my second anniversary, I took some time to reflect on my experience so far here at Queen's Park. As I say, I'm truly privileged and proud to be here. But I am still puzzled by the government's apparent and obvious foot-dragging and dithering on important issues. Why are we spending hours debating a bill we all agree on and that overlaps with what the feds are implementing at the national level?

A few weeks ago, our leader, Tim Hudak, came in and said, "Let's clear the deck of all these bills that you've had waiting. There's a backlog of them." The Premier asked him. She wanted to get on to business and doing other things. We've agreed to that, and yet here we are again today, Speaker, debating a bill that has already been through, from my perspective, the support of the House, could have already been in committee and been passed, had we not prorogued the last time. We need to just pass it and get on to the necessary task of job creation and debt reduction.

We should be in this House talking every day about jobs. There were 550,000 or 600,000 people who woke up this morning without a job and don't see any plan by the governing Liberals to really change that. We should be talking about debt reduction, and yet next year I believe the projection is another \$1.4 billion on to the accumulated deficit, and that's going to be a record \$330 billion at the end of their term. They've virtually run us down the deficit track as far as we can go until we go off the cliff, and we see nothing really stopping that over-spending in anything that we hear from them.

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I've recently been given the privilege to be the critic for children and youth. In the couple of quick briefings and meetings I've had with people from that side of the portfolio, they're telling me about how terrible the services are out there and that there's such a lack out there for people in need. I know the minister is going to jump up and say something here, but at the end of the day, they've had 10 years to fix a lot of the so-called problems that they ended up with. I don't see a lot of action, in many cases.

I'm not being critical of the minister; I know that it's a big job over there, but we need to be doing more than just having conversations and talking and spinning in the media. We need to see true action and we need to start here debating these truly big needs of the province of Ontario and the people we serve.

In my riding, we're talking about school closings. With a \$10-billion deficit and all that money going to interest payments—that could be keeping schools open in rural Ontario like the ones that are facing closure in my riding, which then has a ripple effect of people not staying in the community. They leave, and then there are fewer people paying into the taxation rolls that we all need.

The Green Energy Act, which is going to cost us billions and billions and billions and is forcing people out of this great province: I have seniors and disadvantaged people coming to me and saying, "You know what? I cannot afford my hydro bill anymore. It's bigger than my mortgage. It's bigger than any of my other bills, and I can't afford that." Yet this government still seems intent on steamrolling down that path and adding more to the grid. It makes no sense whatsoever, and yet today we talk about the wireless bill, which could already be enacted and in place.

We talked earlier in question period this morning about another big, colossal nightmare—horse racing. "We're going to fix it with a five-year plan." Well, why did we decimate the industry, only to come back and feel like we're the firemen saving the house? You made the mistake. You've totally decimated that industry. People are leaving, and 30,000 to 60,000 people, again, are going to be out of work because of that decision, and we're talking about a wireless bill that could already be enacted.

I only do this because it was already put in my notes to bring up the Markdale Hospital, because I think it is a very valid point. Again, there are things like the Markdale Hospital—people's health and welfare and well-being—that we could be debating in this House, instead of talking about a wireless bill that again, could already have been enacted and in place.

We need legislation to fix the jobs crisis in Ontario. That's what my constituents in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound are asking for—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to ask the member to bring his comments back to Bill 60.

Mr. Bill Walker: It will be my pleasure to get back to the wireless bill. Again, I just have to reiterate that we could have had this wireless bill enacted if the Liberal government on the opposite side hadn't prorogued Parliament. If they weren't making such a mess of the province, we probably would have a lot of this stuff in place. We'd have legislation already in place for many of these things.

I don't know how many more times we need to remind the Liberals in power of Ontario's urgent jobs need, because you know what? People won't be able to afford those cellphones if they don't have jobs, so then this becomes a moot point. Why don't we focus on people having jobs? Why do people not have hope in this province anymore? Why are they coming to me, saying, "We've had enough." Enough is enough. We can't live any longer with this. Our kids and grandkids are already going to be indebted for generations to come because of

decisions that this Liberal government has made over the last eight to 10 years.

It's great that the Liberals want to debate a bill that will have a direct impact on a lot of people, because 80% of the population, as I referenced earlier, does use cellphones. But I get back to the very valid point: If people cannot afford their cellphone because their hydro rates are going over the top, if they can't afford it because they don't have a job, then putting in legislation that says "you shall" and "you should" has no real impact, because at the end of the day they are worried about—"Where am I going tomorrow to get a job? How am I going to pay the bills in my house? How am I going to send my kids and grandchildren to school so that they get a good education? How are we going to fund health care?" The most important thing in all of our lives is the health of our family and our friends and our loved ones. But the way this province is going, this bill is not going to change much of that other than give some people a little bit of reprieve. At the end of the day, we need to be getting this through. This should have already been through. We don't need to be debating it much longer in this House. It could have been a done deal. The feds are coming in with new regulations and legislation that will virtually do everything that's being said in here.

My suggestion to the government would be: Why don't you fast-track this one? Get it off the dock like all the other ones that we've agreed to and let's get down to the real important things like health care, jobs and spending cuts that we need, to ensure that we actually aren't spending more money servicing the debt.

I'm not certain that the people at home have really caught on to this. The third-biggest expenditure in this Liberal government is servicing the debt, paying interest that could be going to hospitals, to mentally challenged people, to the homeless. It could be ensuring that every community has jobs and innovation centres so that we actually can become again the province of Confederation that is the engine, not the laggard.

We need to get bills like this through as quickly as we can. We're generally supportive but we want it to get through. That government over there has the ability to pass it tomorrow if they truly wish to; they could have passed it the last time, had they not prorogued. We're getting tired of talking about the same bills over and over and over.

We want to see their jobs plan. We want to see what they're doing tomorrow to make sure those 600,000 people have hope and the ability to get a good-paying job, which helps all of us at the end of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: It's a great pleasure to stand up and comment towards the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound's presentation here this afternoon. We've heard lots of scenarios happening within his speech today.

I'm quite thrilled to hear that they would be looking forward at fast-tracking this bill. We know how many

bills they've held up on us to move forward. Unlike the Liberals themselves and the government themselves—they could have had this bill completed but did prorogue the government. Fast-tracking—I heard that quite a few times, and it was something that we heard quite often last week when we were pushing through a bill for one company named EllisDon and making sure that that company's needs were being met within this Legislature, which they actually didn't quite need to be. They were being dealt with in a court, but again, that was the fast-tracking that was happening here between the government and the Conservatives at that time.

To bring me back to what's actually being spoken to today regarding the wireless bill, there are some great recommendations in here that I know people in my riding would definitely be looking forward to. Making sure that there's a cap that could be put on cancellation fees is absolutely essential, because we know that being signed in to a three-year contract, with the way that things are changing and the modernization of the cellphone industry and the iPads and everything else that needs this service is just happening at lightning speed—so for someone to be held into a three-year contract is an absolute—it doesn't really work with the time of the day.

So I'm happy to see regulations put on there. I'm happy to see that companies would be asked to pay more when consumers have problems—and that's the end of my time. It goes so quickly here at Queen's Park today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: It's a responsibility, duty and privilege to speak in support of Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act. I think many of us have shared and experienced various levels of horror stories. In my experience, I don't think we've quite hit \$22,000 or the \$900 for roaming charges, but to avoid those types of unintended consequences, these sort of horrendous charges that some of us might provoke without really realizing it, that's what this wireless services agreement protection act is all about. It's about consumer rights. I think we've itemized a number of the different issues here, whether it's disclosure of the goods and services, consent always, the all-inclusive pricing.

Of course, the due diligence that certainly is demanded by consumers themselves before you sign on the dotted line—and I might just express as well: Do not let anyone, whether it's a member of Parliament or a salesman at the door, pressure you into agreeing to a contract that you don't fully understand.

I need to, as well, just quickly address my honourable colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound who immediately amortized lifelong debts to a newborn. Well, having a newborn in my home, September 19, Muhammad Salman Qaadri, our third child—he will be screened for 32 diseases. He will have hundreds of dollars of vaccinations provided to him, he will have full-day kindergarten, he will have hearing and vision tests, and he will have the highest life expectancy in the western world. That's part of the legacy of the honourable Minister of

Health, the McGuinty-Wynne vision, and of course, he's going to be using cellphones to tell the world about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: Congratulations to the member on the birth of his child.

I'm pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the speech from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device.

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I bring the title in because the member did cover a few other topics as well, as you pointed out, Mr. Speaker. I note he spoke passionately about the Markdale Hospital, with the Minister of Health in attendance, and about how he'd like to see some shovels in the ground there and get that hospital built. I'm sure the minister will be supportive of that.

The bill deals with wireless contracts. Essentially, it brings in more disclosure obligations and more information on cost, a description of services and what effect the specific services would have on costs of particular wireless agreements. I think we've probably all initially, if you've gotten a cellphone or other devices, if you've travelled anywhere—gone to the States, for example—and come back, the first time you did it and came back from a trip and found out you had huge roaming costs you weren't likely aware of. I've certainly had that experience, and so now I'm pretty darn cautious about it if I'm travelling either to the United States or somewhere else. Last year, my wife and I went to visit our daughter over in London and then Ireland for a week. We were quite careful about trying to make sure we bought the necessary coverage for Ireland. In the end we didn't buy as much as we thought we needed, and we still had some pretty significant bills.

It's an area that's changing quickly, it think. All parties are supporting this bill, and we're looking forward to seeing it pass.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure to speak on this bill and to congratulate the member for Etobicoke North on the birth of a child, and happy anniversary to the two-year gang who are out celebrating.

Earlier, the Minister of Education talked about roaming and border areas. It reminded me about something I guess about eight or nine years ago now. I was still reporting in Windsor and driving down Riverside Drive right across from Detroit. There were two cars in front of me, and one driver was in distress. Another man was on the phone trying to call 911. I was on my way to a story, but I pulled over and tried to help. The problem was, one of the drivers had a heart attack, so the driver that pulled over first tried to call 911 in Windsor. The problem was, the call was received through roaming on a cell tower in downtown Detroit. The 911 operator in

Detroit had no idea how to transfer a call. There was no protocol at all to get that call to first responders in Canada. They went rough 411. They got the Ministry of Health, press one, press two for English or French, for an OHIP card. It took nine minutes or longer for the 911 operator in Detroit to contact first responders in Canada. Unfortunately, it was too late. That said, there is a better protocol in place now. But hearing that and knowing the technology that we're facing today on roaming charges, we still have technology on the borders. We have to do better on the border to make sure that when you place a call, you expect it to be picked up in the country that you're in or where your cellphone is.

I think we can fix little bits, and this bill does that, but there's the entire system that needs fixing, and a lot of that has to do with protection for consumers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to my colleagues from Hamilton Mountain, Etobicoke North, Parry Sound-Muskoka and Windsor-Tecumseh for your comments, and a special shout-out to my colleague from Etobicoke North and congrats on the birth of your son. I agree with you that your son is walking into the greatest country in the world with the greatest services in the world that we all can have. I would also hope that you will teach him a fundamental principle: to live within your means and not burden his kids and grandkids, like some of you and your colleagues have done in the last eight years. I stand here not as a partisan, but to say it because I truly am concerned about where we've taken this great province and where we continue to take it on the current path we're on. We can't continue to burden our next generation and the generation after that. We need to ensure that we're talking significantly about the challenges we face and putting actions in place to address it today.

We can't continue with the partisan rhetoric and the spin that's in the media every morning, and forgetting about those kids and those grandkids who are actually the ones who are going to suffer as a result of the consequences of the very poor decisions that are often being made, unfortunately, in this House.

Our next generation is the exact reason I'm here. My two boys and, hopefully, their kids, and my nephews and nieces—we need to ensure we're making the right decisions in this House. We need to be talking about the issues, and that's why, yes, I did go away from just the services bill to talk about job creation and debt reduction and the ability to manage our province to the best of our ability, because those are the things that the people in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound sent me to this House to talk about every day.

Yes, the wireless services bill is a good thing; yes, it's going to help consumer protection; and, yes, it could already be in place. So why are we continuing to debate it and not talking about things like jobs, future prosperity, innovation, health care, education—the things that our

kids definitely need us to be standing here and talking about every day, Speaker?

I will, as my colleagues have talked about, be supporting this bill. I really wish we could get it through and get it off the docket so we can talk about the more important, pressing needs; we have to, if we really care about those folks sitting in front of you and those at home who are going to be our future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour, always, to rise in this House on behalf of the good people of Parkdale-High Park.

I listened with great interest. By the way, if you're tuning in or if we're gaining you back, or if we're just about to lose you, we are talking about Bill 60, which is the wireless bill. It's called the Wireless Services Agreements Act. What it does is it makes some changes to the way that wireless contracts are dispensed, read and dealt with in this province.

Many members have talked about their horror stories. The member from Essex talked about his \$900 roaming fee. I'm sure we've all had roaming fees that have shocked us and surprised us and appalled us. Also, we heard Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound talk about some person who came back to a \$23,000 cellphone bill. Hopefully, with this bill and, of course, its federal counterpart, that sort of ugly surprise will be a thing of the past.

The member from Windsor-Tecumseh talked about a life-and-death situation where, again, this government should answer to the needs of Ontarians, both whether they're in Windsor or the north, where it's hard to get cellphone service.

There was discussion of the old dial-up days, and I wanted to kind of walk people down a little bit of memory lane. I remember very, very well the days before cellphones in this province, where it was a land line or nothing. I am that old. I remember, at that point, early on in my relationship with my husband, the courting relationship, that he was in Ottawa, doing his doctoral degree, and I was living in Huron-Bruce, a new, ordained United Church minister—about a 6.5-hour drive away from each other, so we were long-distance. There was the phone—that's how we communicated—and/or, just towards the end of our courting period, there was email.

I don't know which was worse, because the old land line that we used to have—I mean, we would get bills at the end of the month—we're talking about roaming bills here on cellphones. We would get long-distance bills in those days that would be more than our rent. There would be hundreds of dollars in bills, just from talking to the person you didn't want to get off the phone with over long-distance.

Then, as email came in, there would be that horrible dial-up sound—the member from Essex brought it all back—that nasty dial-up sound, and you knew you could have time to go and make yourself a cup of tea, maybe a sandwich, in the kitchen, and come back, and maybe by

then the email would be loaded. Then it took just as long to get the response.

It was very Victorian, when you think about it, that kind of romance back then.

All that—the way of the dodo. Now it's absolutely essential—and one can't stress that enough. I think a number of speakers have stressed that it's absolutely essential to have a cellphone in this day and age. I mean, just to say that is saying something. You need one; you absolutely need one. It's a necessity.

What this bill attempts to deal with is something that has become an essential service—an essential service—to most Ontarians and make it just a little fairer.

We in the New Democratic Party, among our other answers, are constantly fighting to have Ombudsman oversight over the MUSH sector. We're the only province, still, in all of Canada that doesn't have Ombudsman oversight over hospitals, for example. Well, we need a consumer advocate. We need somebody that you can call when you've got a problem with the kind of abuse that we've seen, for example, in the cellphone industry.

1500

It's not unique to the cellphone industry. Because it's an essential, it just happens to hit home a little harder. You're looking at someone who has a lifetime membership to Vic Tanny's. Anybody remember Vic Tanny's? Well, my life lasted a lot longer than Vic Tanny's, I'll tell you. We've all signed contracts we regret, is the moral of that story.

When you look at cellphone contracts, it's basically an accordion. You sign here, and if you look at the terms and conditions you could just kind of go like this with them. It would take a law degree to really get into them, and that's the problem. The bill purports to amend that, to change that so that the terms of the contract are actually written in real English that people without a law degree can read and should be able to read, and read pretty clearly and quickly.

I know many of us have children who also use cellphones. My daughter got into real trouble with one contract that never should have been allowed. It should be illegal. It should have absolutely been. I couldn't believe it; she was paying \$250 a month for nothing, for a cellphone contract. This is ridiculous. These kinds of fees are absurd. Now the government has come forward with this bill, but it's kind of a little too late.

The federal bill is going to deal with most of this, but the question is, this government has been in business for 10 years. For 10 years, the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals have been the government of this province, so for 10 long years, something as straightforward and simple as consumers being ripped off over and over again on their cellphone contracts and bills—again, a necessity—for 10 years, this government had a chance to do something about it, and did nothing. And here we are, just under the wire as the federal legislators are working on it, to where the bill is largely redundant because it has already been dealt with.

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of dollars have been spent and, of course, we know where they've gone. They've gone into profits. They have gone into some of the most profitable companies that we have. One of them, Rogers, that we deal with here—I have to say, if you have a television system under Rogers, good luck getting service. I mean, if something goes wrong with your television, Rogers is not known for its wonderful service. Let me tell you that, as a consumer of Rogers, and yet they have virtually a monopoly in this part of the world.

These are huge companies. They're huge companies making huge profits, and it takes 10 years to act and bring them into the realm of reason. Whereas last Thursday, one large company, EllisDon—bang! If they want something done, whoosh! A week later, it is passed through this Legislature. But here consumers wait 10 years just to get some relief on some of the most outrageous—in fact, the most outrageous—cellphone bills on the planet, as you've heard many say.

One of the better places for cellphone usage and cellphone bills is the Scandinavian countries. Well, surprise, surprise. Social democratic countries do something right yet again. Isn't it interesting that we look to Scandinavian countries for doing just about everything right? Earlier today in question period, there was a Swedish delegation coming to visit. They were here during question period. One hopes they stay. One hopes the Swedish delegation stays, has sessions with the Wynne cabinet and actually teaches them how to run a country or jurisdiction.

There are nine million people in Sweden. It's smaller than Ontario; we have about 13 million and some. Why can't the Wynne government sit down with the Swedes and learn a thing or two about how to run a jurisdiction where you've got, by the way, free post-secondary education, virtually free childcare, post-secondary students are paid to go to school there, no poverty, housing, a vibrant economy and cheaper cellphone use? Maybe if the Swedes sat down with the Wynne government, they might be able to share some of that expertise on how to run a jurisdiction so that social services could actually be provided to people.

I know there were a couple of ministers over the last sessions here—I won't name names, because I think it's so outrageous; I actually still want them to keep talking to me, but it is in Hansard—who stood up and crowed that we spend less on social services per capita than any other province. I don't think that's something to be proud of. I think that's something to be horribly ashamed of.

We spend less per capita on our students, for example, and post-secondary education than any other province, and our students graduate with more debt than in any other province and pay higher tuition than in any other province. What? That's something to be proud of? That we spend less per capita? Remember that that includes education, health care and all those good things, but yet, when large companies need something done, boy, fast action from this government.

So to get back to the bill, G60, this wireless bill: It's kind of a redundant bill. I gather that about 62% of the complaints that go into the government and consumer services are about contracts and cellphones—62%. So, again, it's surprising that it took 10 years to get some action.

A consumer advocate or an Ombudsman kind of role presumably could get action a little faster than 10 years. It could get something going, something to help people who are being gouged—might we say “ripped off,” because really they are? It might have happened a little faster if we had had the Ombudsman involved here or a consumer advocate, which we have long, long advised.

But, again, you've got an administration here—and I know that the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, of course, went on about the failings of this government. But really, whether it's cellphone use, whether it's post-traumatic stress disorder for our first responders, whether it's poverty, whether it's child care in the province, whether it's payday lending, whether it's the economy, whether it's minimum wage, this is a government that is loath to act and very, very happy to study and consult. Why act when you can actually get a group of people in a room and pay them per diems and give them coffee, hopefully—

Miss Monique Taylor: And a lunch.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —and a lunch to study? Why act when you can do that? We've had 10 years of doing that. We've had 10 years of doing that on the poverty file and all of these other things I've mentioned.

There was action on minimum wage because a huge campaign was waged. It takes that. It's like pushing an elephant uphill, I've always said, Mr. Speaker, to get something done in this place, and there's been a lot of pushing to get some of these things done.

We really are in a crisis mode here in Ontario. We're in a crisis mode. There was the workers' action study, among others, that said that one out of every two jobs, just about, is precarious employment in this province. That means that in answer to the question, “Will I have a job next year?” the answer was, “I don't know. I don't know whether I'll have a job next year.” Quite frankly, I think the electorate at this point is getting to the point where they say the only people who should be answering, “I don't know if I'll have a job next year,” should be the people who are sitting in the benches of cabinet on the Liberal side, the government side. They should be the ones answering that question with an “I don't know,” because if one out of every two Ontarians is saying that, then surely the priority of this government should be jobs and the economy.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is quite right. Instead, we're debating the wireless cellphone use bill, which, let's face it, is okay. It's okay. I mean, what does it say? “You have a right to sue the big wireless companies.” Well, that's nice. That's sort of like saying citizens' groups have a right to go to the Ontario Municipal Board if a developer does something egregious in their neighbourhood. The problem is that the developer

goes to the OMB with a lawyer, with a planner, with deep pockets, and the citizens—what have they got? They took a day off work. I suspect the right to sue in Small Claims Court—who's going to take the time, really, to go after their cellphone provider for \$100 or \$200? It might cost you more in time off work and fees to go after them for money than it does out of anything you'll get. And if you really go after them, boy oh boy, you're met with a phalanx of lawyers and everything that a multinational could throw at you, and what have you got? You've got a day off work. But you have a right to exit your plans.

These are good things. Don't get me wrong; we're going to support this bill. There has never been any question of that. But the question is, really, for all the legislative time it has taken, for the 10 years it has even taken to get here, based on the number of complaints, I would have thought that's a no-brainer. That should have happened very, very quickly. The consumer advocate—presumably, that should have happened almost immediately.

1510

When we talk about consumer advocates, we had the great good fortune in my riding of having Mike Holmes come and help rebuild our playground that an arsonist had burned down in High Park. Thank goodness he did. Thank goodness for people like him, a really genuine person; one of the few, I must say, who I have met with sort of celebrity status who really are as they seem on television. He really is as he seems on television: a really good guy. He works, I think, out of the best of intentions. He has gone out around the city and around the province fixing shoddy workmanship. Now, for every house that he fixes, there's a horror story. For everything that he helps, there's a horror story: again, contracts. Again, people have signed on with renovators, contractors. Honestly, there is probably a shady contract happening every second of every day in this province.

Without a consumer advocate, without someone to turn to, without someone who's ultimately responsible, other than the minister who sits here, what are people going to do: wait for legislation covering every single aspect of our economy? Because, really, that's how slowly this elephant is being pushed up this hill. Presumably, there's a better way of going about protecting consumers than this.

In terms of protecting consumers, the most egregious example of ripping off consumers, it seems to me, is the payday lending industry, which is again being studied. This is an industry which exists all over Toronto. There's a payday lender on every second corner. You know what the interest is that they charge? Over 500% interest a year, annualized. That's what they're charging, all of them. Do not be fooled with "\$21 for every \$100 you borrow." Yes, you pay \$21. Annualized, do you know what that looks like? Over 500% interest. That's legal? That's insane. And now we have online borrowing. So we've basically legalized usury in this province. That is essentially what has happened. So you talk about ripping

off a consumer? There is no more egregious act than that, yet it exists everywhere.

When I asked the Minister of Consumer Services about it, guess what the answer was, Mr. Speaker. They're studying the issue. They are studying the issue, and the words out of her mouth were almost the mirror of the words out of the mouth of Stan Keyes, who is the head of the payday lending association.

Again, you've got a government that brings in a bill for EllisDon on the Thursday and works with Stan Keyes the rest of the time on payday lending. Talk about the fox in the chicken coop. This is like opening the door of the chicken coop and saying, "Come on in, foxes. It's all yours." Guess who the chickens are? Us. We are the consumers, right?

So this little bill that helps not many—because, again, it's superseded by the federal bill, which makes it somewhat redundant—makes it look, let's face it, like the government is doing something for consumers when, in reality, the province is filled with consumers who have been ripped off by ridiculous contracts, who are going to a payday lender to borrow money at 544% interest. That's the reality of being a consumer in Ontario.

When we need to complain, we get a bureaucracy that listens to our complaint, nods and empathizes, and takes a piece of legislation that takes 10 years to get to the floor before you get relief, and even then you don't, because my friend from Essex with his \$900 roaming fee had to go to bat for himself. A person with a \$23,000 bill had to go to bat for themselves.

We're talking about horror stories here of consumers' realities, and we haven't even talked about the door-to-door energy retailers. That's again another nightmare, preying on seniors, mainly, but on just about everybody who will open the door. So all of a sudden this legislator who has a lifetime membership to Vic Tanny's—hey, I'm just like every other Ontarian. I get ripped off, and there ain't nobody out there looking out for me. Really, there isn't. I, for one, Mr. Speaker, would like to think that I do have a government that looks out for me. I would like to think that there are laws in place to hem in those whose sole purpose is just to rip me off, to steal from me my hard-earned wages. I would like to think that.

So this bill purports to be a little step in that direction. But truly, in the great scheme of things, it hardly counts, and no wonder, because it's very clear that he who pays the piper calls the tune in this province. And even though we are paying the piper, as the electorate, as the people who vote in politicians, somehow our call for a tune doesn't get listened to quite as well, quite as efficiently as, say, an EllisDon or a Rogers or anybody else.

So here we are. Yes, we support the bill. Sure. Why not? It will be redundant by the time it ever gets through committee. Meanwhile, I still have my lifetime membership to Vic Tanny's. I, for one, am happy. I don't have dial-up Internet anymore, and I don't always have to use a land line when talking to my husband long-distance.

But, really, nothing much has changed. If you're in Ontario, it's "buyer beware." If you're in Ontario, it's completely up to you. Do your research. Look out for everything and everyone, because it's truly the Wild East here. The government does little to protect you, and this bill really won't do much either. At the end of the day, you will still be paying the highest cellphone rates in the world in Ontario, despite what this bill does.

With that, I'll sit down and not work out, because, remember, I have that lifetime membership to Vic Tanny's.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to respond and speak about Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013. I want to congratulate our Minister of Consumer Services, Tracy MacCharles, for bringing this piece of legislation forward.

We on this side of the House, in government, have brought forward a number of bills in the last year or two to deal with consumer protection issues. I don't think we can overstate the importance of this kind of legislation, because at the end of the day, it is very much the kind of thing that people in our ridings—and I know that people in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan—very much pay attention to.

Very recently, as I mentioned—in the last year or two—we have brought forward consumer protection legislation that dealt with gas contracts, electricity contracts and hot water heater rentals. We know—at least it was the experience in my office in Thunder Bay—Atikokan—that it seemed that most of the people who would come into our office for help on those issues were seniors. It seemed like they were the ones who were being most taken advantage of by very aggressive door-to-door sales tactics on those three categories that I mentioned previously. We've brought in legislation to deal with that. Consumer protection is very important.

What's interesting about this one, I think, is that it's a bit distinctive. It's dealing more with cellphone contracts, and I think it's fair to say there are fewer seniors involved with cellphones—although, of course, they are—than certainly almost every person under 25. I don't know what the percentage for usage of cellphones is, but obviously it's very high.

We know that at the root of this is people being charged and overcharged, in our opinion. We hear about this in our constituency offices as well. People are being forced to pay too much money. This legislation, Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013, is going to help and protect people. It has become so commonplace, now, that you have a phone. This is going to touch many people in our ridings. I thank the minister for bringing it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the member from Parkdale—High Park.

In Ontario, you have to wonder. I know this bill has been front and centre for many, many years. It's interesting that after the CRTC regulations came out, all of a sudden it becomes front and centre and finally gets pushed over the top by the government. Really, there's very little left in this bill when you take out the new CRTC code.

We want to make sure there is some clarity. We don't want the provincial bill to say something and the federal bill to say something slightly different. We want to make sure we go through this and that we actually make the bill worthwhile and make it so it's clear when we're done.

There's no question that there needed to be some issues addressed, but come June 3 of this year, the code actually covered more than this bill, because a lot of the issues were federal in nature. Roaming charges: There were caps put on them. This bill can't, because it's provincial.

But at the end, we want something that's workable for consumers. We want something that doesn't end up in court challenges based on one statute versus the other. We're looking forward to getting it into committee.

1520

At a subcommittee meeting earlier, just a few minutes ago, we were looking at trying to get stakeholders in so that we can hear some of the issues that we may not have come across just yet. There was a very limited time to debate this. At committee, clause by clause will be just a short two-hour session. We want to make sure that we have the time, that we can work through it and get through the necessary amendments, and try to make this bill relevant for the people of Ontario, to make it so that it's clear, and we end up with legislation that works for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the words and the thought that my colleague from Parkdale—High Park put into her commentary. She touched on a number of areas where in fact there is a crying need for public protection. Clearly, payday loan companies need to be dealt with. People are paying outrageous amounts of interest. That kind of bill needs to be before us.

This bill, as I had said earlier this afternoon, has a few good elements but they're extraordinarily limited. The cap on closing-out fees, some protection on roaming, right to sue—those are not bad things, but they're very limited. As my colleague has said, the ability of most people to go and sue a telephone company, Rogers, Bell or Telus, is extraordinarily limited. Set aside the fact that those companies probably have enough lawyers to fill this chamber, the simple fact that most people don't have the time and ability to pursue a large, well-resourced, well-grounded company for several hundred dollars is a simple reality.

This bill would be far better if there was a consumer advocate in place who could act on behalf of the public dealing with unfair billing practices, dealing with errors that companies refuse to recognize. We, often, in our

dealings with telephone companies, feel incredible futility. They operate on their own, with us as a minor irritant in the background.

My congratulations to the speaker from Parkdale–High Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to stand up today to speak to Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, and I also would like to congratulate the minister for bringing forward an important piece of legislation for consumer protection.

Protecting consumers and ensuring a fair marketplace is part of our government's plan to help people in their everyday lives. We can all agree here that protecting consumers is a good thing. Bill 60 does this through full disclosure of goods and services, including which services are provided, which services would result in added costs, what manufacturer's warranty, if any, on the devices that an individual had and comprehensive easy-to-understand agreements. It would also require consent—now, this is something that the CRTC's work does not include—if a contract is to be amended, renewed or extended. This is a very important piece of consumer protection.

All-inclusive pricing is another aspect of the bill. Service providers would have to include the total cost of any agreement in any price advertisement. Again, this is very important, and something that's not covered by the CRTC. The other things that are important to this bill are a cap on cancellation fees or no fee at all. It would give consumers the right to cancel a wireless services agreement at any time without giving notice to their provider. Cost to cancel would depend on what type of agreement that was.

It protects in terms of unacceptable billing. Consumers could not be charged for the services they could not access because their hardware was being repaired while under warranty. If a customer received a loaner phone while their first one was being repaired, the loaner phone would need to be provided free of charge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I am pleased to return to the member for Parkdale–High Park for her response.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, as I said—and thanks to all who weighed in on this debate—let the buyer beware; caveat emptor. In Ontario, you're still not safe if you're a consumer. You're still not protected if you're a consumer. Don't expect your government to do much for you if you are a consumer. This bill won't change that. Certainly, with the new CRTC regulations, it will do very little to change that, if at all.

Again, cellphone use is still the most expensive here of most jurisdictions in the world—if you can get cellphone use, which, many speakers have pointed out, is still a problem in some areas of Ontario, as is getting good Internet service. This should not be the case in a developed nation such as ours, in a developed province such as this.

We should take advice from some of those who do it much, much better, i.e. the Swedish delegation who are in this very House this very day. Why doesn't this cabinet, this government, meet with them to learn how to reproduce what they have accomplished in their jurisdiction here in Ontario—about all things, really, but particularly here, where, again, they have much cheaper cellphone use and much more democratically available cellphone and Internet use?

I do remember something that I forgot, Mr. Speaker: Do you remember when the first cellphones came out, and they were like a brick? Remember those? We thought they were so cool. They weighed about five pounds, and you held them, maybe, with one hand against your ear. Those of us who are old enough to know know that it was ever thus, but it does not make it right.

Surely, what we really need in this province is, we need a consumer advocate or Ombudsman oversight. We need someone you can turn to to complain to about your rights.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very happy to speak to Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act, 2013. We're looking forward to this bill going to committee and looking forward to making the everyday lives of Ontarians better.

I too want to share a cellphone horror story, similar to the member from Essex. A few years ago, I went to visit family in India, and I took my cellphone along. I knew that I would be paying more—\$200 or \$300, maybe \$400 at the most—but when I got back, my staff were very surprised to learn that I had a \$2,500 phone bill. They thought someone might have used it inappropriately. That wasn't the case. I phoned Rogers; in fact, they were right in accordance to their agreement that I had with them, and I had to pay the bill.

Those are the types of reasons why we are bringing forward this bill. Cellphones, at one time, as the member from Parkdale–High Park stated, were big. They were very expensive. I remember seeing ads in the paper where they were being sold for upwards of \$7,000 to \$8,000, and the pay per use was also very expensive: more than \$2 or \$3 a minute.

Along with the progression of cellphones, there are also problems that have arisen in this industry. That makes it even more important for bills such as this one—not particularly with the pricing problems, but we have also brought about legislation to ban cellphones, because we have seen many catastrophes where people have become injured or even been killed because of the use of cellphones, so problems that we were not aware of before. Again, for the same reason, we are looking forward to this bill going to committee so we can hear from Ontarians about some of the things that we may have missed.

1530

I am from Brampton West. It's a riding which is diverse, with quite a few people from other places who have recently moved to Brampton and to Canada, and they have come into a new system for everything in their lives, especially the new billing system for cellphones. I know, talking to friends and family in other countries, the billing model is a lot different than ours. For example, a lot of countries have pay-as-you-go systems, but we have a system where we get billed at the end of the month for the services that we've used.

Oftentimes, through ethnic media, I hear from different cellphone providers advertising that has some fairly decent rates on the face of it. For example, for \$25 you get a cellphone, unlimited phone calling, but what they don't tell you in the fine print is some of the services you may end up using, such as, for example, if you're travelling, roaming. They don't tell you how much that will cost, and that creates a problem. That's when, a lot of times, phone companies and, moreover, we as MPPs from all sides of the House get calls. Oftentimes we are able to resolve the issues they have; more than often, we cannot because the phone companies are right: They do have those stipulations in their contracts about the costs that people would incur if they used certain different types of services.

That's why in this bill we would be requiring full disclosure of goods and services. Providers would have to clearly explain in easy language what charges would result as a result of different services. As well, with respect to manufacturers' warranties, providers would have to clearly explain what the warranties are and if there are additional warranties the consumer can purchase. As well, phone providers would have to give an explanation of how the cancellation fees would be applied to the agreement. And, as I stated before, they would be required to clearly demonstrate on their contracts how the roaming fees are charged, because roaming is one of the main problems. Roaming charges are one of the main problems that consumers have with cellphones and one of the more frequent calls that the ministry and our offices get with respect to cellphones.

The second main part of this bill deals with comprehensive and easy-to-understand agreements. That would require that the cellphone providers provide easy and clear language so that consumers can understand what they are signing up for. If they do not provide it, the consumers have the right to cancel. Again, with respect to my riding of Brampton West, a lot of new Canadians who may not be sure of what they're signing up for because of the language barriers would need to have explained exactly what services they are signing for and how much they will be paying for those services.

The third broad point of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is that the companies would require consent from the users of the cellphones to amend, renew or extend the contract. Oftentimes we give our credit card number to the cellphone company, and we may sign for a certain length of time. Once you go beyond that, you keep

getting billed if you're using it. This bill would require that the companies would have to contact you to ask if you plan to continue with the agreement that's in place.

The fourth main component of this bill would give consumers the right to cancel a wireless service agreement at any time by giving notice to the provider. This has been, again, one of the bigger problems in the past, and with this bill we would be addressing that issue.

I know there have been statements made with respect to the CRTC, but the CRTC's recent changes have not addressed all the issues that exist with respect to the use of cellphones. With this bill, Mr. Speaker, we hope that we will be able to tackle most of the problems that consumers face when they are using their cellphones or when they are interacting with the cell companies with respect to their cellphones.

Like I said before, we're looking forward to taking this bill to the committee, with the hope of making the lives of ordinary Ontarians easier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? Questions and comments?

Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 60. You have to excuse my voice; I'm getting over the cold that seems to be going through the Legislature. If you haven't received the cold yet, when you do, it's horrible. As part of that, I'm glad that we have pharmacists in the building. The Ontario Pharmacists' Association is meeting with various representatives throughout the Legislature. So if you are coming down with a cold, it's the best time to talk to them about the medication that you're on, and perhaps they could prescribe you something to take to help alleviate the cold.

It was really interesting this morning when I met with the pharmacists. They gave the nine policies that they're after, the nine priorities they want this government to look at, so I thought I'd just go over them before I hit my speech here:

(1) Enable community pharmacists to provide more patient care services.

(2) Provide fair and adequate compensation for the valuable health care services pharmacists provide.

(3) Provide fair funding for the work of pharmacy owners in delivering clinical services to Ontario's public drug program patients.

(4) Establish a formal relationship between the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. I think that's a great idea. Point number four is probably key to this whole day—ensuring that there's proper dialogue between the OPA and the Ministry of Health, which seems to have disappeared over the past few years.

(5) Implement a comprehensive plan to reduce the misuse and abuse of prescription narcotics and other controlled substances. That's another great point.

(6) Secure government investment in technology.

(7) Encourage investment by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care in a drug supply monitoring system, in collaboration with the government of Canada.

(8) Ensure that family health teams, community care access centres and other primary-care practice sites have sufficient resources to employ a pharmacist—or if they can't, refer them to community pharmacies.

(9) Enable hospital pharmacists to practise their maximum scope of practice. There's a lot of talent in our pharmacists, especially at the hospital level, that we could expand upon to improve the health care of citizens across this province

I thank you for your indulgence. I gave that little plug in case not all of the MPPs here get a chance to sit and talk with the members of the OPA.

Back to Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services: It's not a shock to anybody that when they open up their phone bill every now and then, they get what they call cell shock, which, of course, is your cell bill with the skyrocketing prices. There's nothing worse than noticing a slew of charges on your cell bill that you didn't realize were coming. From comments from constituents in my office, you'll find that it's not an uncommon occurrence.

Digging into some facts and figures, we've noted that in 2010, wireless services made up 62% of the complaints to the commissioner for complaints for telecommunications. Of those 62% of complaints, 41% were from Ontarians.

Wireless contracts are complicated, and it's very difficult to wade through the complicated legal jargon to know what you're really signing up for. Therefore, I'm pleased to say that we have all-party support for this bill that will help protect consumers when it comes to their mobile devices.

Considering that 80% of Ontarians have a cellphone, this is an issue that affects pretty much everyone, and therefore we must do what we can to make sure we get the law right and make regulations matter.

I'd also like to acknowledge the efforts of our federal regulator, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, in developing a national wireless code of conduct, and I have that right here. We downloaded it from the website. It's quite a document. It's about 10 pages long. I think everybody should give it a good read. It's at www.crtc.gc.ca. Look up the wireless code and take a good look at it. This code helps to provide clarity to both mobile service providers and consumers.

An aspect of that national code that I think is particularly beneficial to consumers involves how the code is to be interpreted. Any ambiguity arising from a mobile contract or how the code is applied to the contract must be interpreted in a manner that is favourable to the consumer. I think that's an excellent point, "favourable to the consumer." You don't see that too often in codes from governments and such that we're going to be favouring the customer going forward. After all, this whole debate is about putting consumers first, so I think we have some very positive things happening toward that end.

1540

Given that there are overlaps in the federal and provincial governments, I want to take time to go over some of the things that the CRTC has included in its national wireless code of conduct in an effort to compare it to Bill 60.

A big part of the debate on consumer protection in the mobile phone market revolves around clarity. In the CRTC wireless code, service providers "must communicate with customers using plain language." They must also "ensure that its written contracts and related documents, such as privacy policies and fair use policies, are written in a way that is clear and easy for customers to read and understand."

Finally, "A service provider must ensure that the prices set out in the contract are clear and must indicate whether these prices include taxes."

I believe this commitment to plain language is important. I'm pleased to see that we also have this provision in Bill 60. As you see, we're not all lawyers. The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton over here is a lawyer. He's a good guy. But most of us are not lawyers, so it helps when the contract into which we're entering can be expressed in simple, easy-to-understand terms.

The CRTC code also stipulates that, "A service provider must not charge a customer any overage charge for services purchased on an unlimited basis."

Further, "A service provider must not limit the use of service purchased on an unlimited basis unless these limits are clearly explained in the fair use policy."

Here we do find a deficiency, though, Mr. Speaker, in Bill 60. There does not appear to be anything regarding overage charges on unlimited services. Perhaps this is something we can clear up when we take this bill to committee in the next few weeks.

The CRTC code also addresses the issue of postpaid and prepaid contracts. For instance, regarding postpaid contracts, key contract terms and conditions must include, "(a) the services included in the contract and any limits on the use of these services that could trigger overage charges or additional fees;

"(b) the minimum monthly charge for services included in the contract;

"(c) the commitment period, including the end date of the contract;

"(d) if applicable,

"(i) the total early cancellation fee;

"(ii) the amount by which the early cancellation fee will decrease each month; and

"(iii) the date on which the customer will no longer be subject to the early cancellation fee;"

This will help consumers better understand the terms of their wireless plan and have a better idea regarding cancellation fees which can take many of us by surprise.

Prepaid providers must also provide detail on the terms and conditions. Bill 60, unfortunately, fails to provide guidance on the transaction of prepaid contracts.

Another big issue many wireless customers face has to do with their providers altering certain aspects of their contract.

Under the CRTC code, the following provisions must be upheld: “(i) A service provider must not change the key contract terms and conditions of a postpaid wireless contract during the commitment period without the customer’s informed and express consent.

“(ii) When a service provider notifies a customer that it intends to change a key contract term or condition during the commitment period, the customer may refuse the change.

“(iii) As an exception, a service provider may only change a key contract term or condition during the commitment period without the customer’s express consent if it clearly benefits the customer by either

“(iv) reducing the rate for a single service; or

“(v) increasing the customer’s usage allowance for a single service.”

Bill 60 also addresses changes to contracts by a supplier. When I first read through the sections of Bill 60 that dealt with this, I found the wording to be somewhat vague. However, I’m confident that between the CRTC code and Bill 60 consumers will be well protected against unilateral contract changes.

The next aspect I’d like to address is bill management with regard to roaming charges. I know I’m not alone in driving up my monthly cell bill after spending a weekend in the States. I can tell you that many people you talk to—Americans who do have their cell charges, they do not compare to what we are charged when we get home, and I think it’s time that we need to take a look at it.

It’s examples like these that I’ve just mentioned that necessitate robust protection when it comes to roaming charges. For instance, the CRTC code states that, “(i) A service provider must notify the customer, at no charge, when their device is roaming in another country. The notification must clearly explain the associated rates for voice, text messaging, and data services.” A provider must also put a cap on data roaming charges. All national and international data roaming charges must be suspended “once they reach \$100 within a single monthly billing cycle, unless the customer expressly consents to pay additional charges.

“ii. A service provider must provide this cap at no charge.”

As for data overage charges: “A service provider must suspend data overage charges once they reach \$50 within a single monthly billing cycle, unless the customer expressly consents to pay additional charges.” To anyone who has taken a mobile device abroad, this provision is welcome news. Bill 60, unfortunately, overlooks this aspect.

Regarding cancellations, I’m pleased that both the CRTC code and Bill 60 address the issue. The CRTC code states: “If a customer cancels a contract before the end of the commitment period, the service provider must not charge the customer any fee or penalty other than the

early cancellation fee. This fee must be calculated in the manner set out” as follows.

For fixed-term contract—subsidized devices: “The early cancellation fee must not exceed the value of the device subsidy. The early cancellation fee must be reduced by an equal amount each month, for the lesser of 24 months or the total number of months in the contract term, such that the early cancellation fee is reduced to \$0 by the end of the period.”

For fixed-term contracts—non-subsidized devices: “The early cancellation fee must not exceed the lesser of \$50 or 10 percent of the minimum monthly charge for the remaining months of the contract, up to a maximum of 24 months. The early cancellation fee must be reduced to \$0 by the end of the period.”

As I said, both the province and the CRTC have addressed the issue in a similar manner.

Another important aspect in the relationship between wireless customers and their providers has to do with a trial period or cooling-off period. With most contracts locking you in for three years, it would be nice for the wireless plan to have a little test drive at first. Bill 60, when enacted, would provide a 10-day cooling off period. The CRTC, though, sets out a 30-day cooling-off period, and I think this aspect is a no-brainer. I think everyone in this room would prefer a 30-day cooling-off period as opposed to a 10-day period. I’m not sure where the ministry got such a contradictory threshold, but I’d like to think the federal regulator has good reason for putting it at 30 days.

Regarding disconnection of the mobile service for things like unpaid bills, Bill 60 fails to provide any guidelines. Luckily, the CRTC has seen it fit to provide the following:

“(i) If the grounds for disconnecting a customer are failure to pay, a service provider can disconnect a customer’s postpaid service only if the customer

“(a) fails to pay an account that is past due, provided it exceeds \$50 or has been past due for more than two months;

“(b) fails to provide or maintain a reasonable security deposit or alternative when requested to do so by the service provider; or

“(c) agreed to a deferred payment plan with the service provider and fails to comply with the terms of this plan.

“(ii) Except with customer consent or in other exceptional circumstances, disconnection may occur only on weekdays between 8 a.m. and 9 p.m. or on weekends between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m., unless the weekday or weekend day precedes a statutory holiday, in which case disconnection may not occur after noon. The applicable time is that of the customer’s declared place of residence.

“(iii) If a service provider disconnects a customer in error, the service provider must restore service to the customer by the end of the next business day and must not impose reconnection charges.”

There’s one more thing I’d like to highlight in my time here. While it’s a small item in this bill, it speaks to some

of the broader differences between our party and the Liberals. This has to do with competition. Bill 60, when dealing with the issue of notification for excess usage charges, seeks to put in place regulations sometime in the future; however, at this point, there's no mention of making use of the fairly large market for free and cheap mobile applications. In other words, there's already a market mechanism by which can address this problem; however, this government thinks it has the ability to monitor, regulate and steer things the right way.

I believe competition and the market can be effective tools to address certain public problems and also to deal with the lack of customer service we now see in our wireless market.

I'll take you back to an instance in my own riding of Elgin-Middlesex-London. Since the pharmacists are here today, I'll use pharmacy as an indication. In St. Thomas alone we have three Shoppers Drug Marts, three independent pharmacies, a Walmart super store pharmacy, and a Yurek Pharmacy. Mr. Speaker, there are nine different pharmacies, and you would think that, in that marketplace, there's service for everybody, which there is. There's also competition to gain other customers. When you can't do it by price, you'll notice a lot of the other people do it by service. That way, you get bidding for your customers through price and/or service.

What's lacking in our marketplace now is, we have the big three—Telus, Rogers and Bell—with control of the system. There is no real reason to compete on service, and I think that's where a lot of our problems stem. They've gotten so big—and they don't have to compete for service—that the service that people are receiving in the wireless marketplace isn't occurring the way we would like to see it.

1550

I think it would be very, very interesting to see, even though the Big Three fought off bringing competition into the marketplace, the fact that if there were other providers out there who can't really beat you all the time on price but could actually provide a service where you didn't have to worry about cancelling your contract and those extra fees, or they gave you a good service on your roaming charges—the things we're arguing about in this bill. There would be someone out there to provide that competition, which actually might instill the Big Three to actually start competing and bringing these advantages to the marketplace without having it regulated by the government. I think this is a big, big opportunity for competition in the marketplace.

I'll even refer it over to the auto insurance file. You might think we have huge competition in auto insurance in Ontario; however, there are many players staying out of the business because it has been over-regulated by the government. The government controls the pricing of the product, and they control what's in the product, which has kept a lot of competitors out of the marketplace. For places like the GTA and Toronto, that has cut down the competition, which we have seen, as we've seen that prices are too high in auto insurance in this province,

particularly in the GTA and Toronto area. Because there's no competition to bring down and lower the prices—because of the stifling regulation and red tape this government has put upon the insurance business—we are seeing the complaints and the big fight that went on in the last budget process.

If they would open up and reduce the red tape; file a new system which would allow individual insurance companies to compete with each other on price; fix the dispute resolution mechanism in order to ensure that people get the treatment they need quickly and as soon as possible within the 60 days, as regulated, as opposed to the 414 days they're now waiting; and deal with the fraud situation that's going on, we would see our auto insurance rates continually go down.

What I'm saying here is, the government can't induce competition into the market by regulation. What they need to do is step back and ensure that they're protecting the consumer but allowing the industry itself to start to compete with one another to lower our prices and give us the services that we really need.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion, I think the intent of this bill is good, and I will be supporting it, along with the other members of the party. I think there are numerous deficiencies, as I've mentioned throughout the speech, that we can address in committee. I'm hoping the government is open to hearing the amendments coming forward so we can truly make this a wonderful bill: protecting the consumers without overlapping what's going on in the federal marketplace, and hopefully, when it comes around again, getting more competition in the marketplace—and that the people who are clamouring for higher rates don't fight because there's competition, too. Competition will lower prices. Together, we can have an open wireless market like other places in the world and have lower rates—not necessarily having the highest rates in the western hemisphere due to the fact that there is really no competition in Canada.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have to say that, normally, I don't always agree with the notion of just a broad-based competition model as a solution to our problems, but I have to give credit to the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London with respect to our cellphones and the fact that our cellphone rates are some of the highest in the entire world. Perhaps he has a point when he talks about the lack of competition in that particular field—in particular when it comes to our cellphone services.

I think there's an argument to be made that where it comes to not only the rates but also the service and the quality of service we receive, many people have complained time and time again—many of my constituents—that the service they receive from any of the Big Three is less than stellar, less than what they would like to see. So I think that's a strong point.

My only concern is that we don't accept the proposition that open competition always results in lower rates. We've seen very well in the energy sector that privatiz-

ation of the energy sector, which was supposed to lead to competition, has not at all reduced our rates when it comes to energy. Our rates have actually gone up, and that has been strong evidence in my mind of the weakness of the argument that competition will always breed lower rates. But in this particular area, I think the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London makes a good point.

With respect to the two levels of the bill, the fact that we have a federal bill and a provincial bill, I initially had made the assertion that we really didn't need to bring this bill forward at this particular time, given that we've already addressed it federally. But now that we have both, there are ways to work together to make sure that the bills don't conflict—that's one of the most important things—and that they work together to provide the strongest protection to consumers in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm happy to rise and speak to Bill 60, the Wireless Services Agreements Act. It's a bill which intends to make the everyday lives of Ontarians easier for the consumers who do use cellphones.

Cellphones and the cellphone industry have evolved quite a bit over the past two decades, and so have the problems. I think this bill goes directly to solve some of those problems, or a majority of those problems, which have been brought to the attention of the Ministry of Consumer Services.

Cellphones have become a part of our lives for most of us. In fact, today I forgot my cellphone at home—my BlackBerry. Although it's not the end of the world, I'll survive—and for those people who are watching and trying to contact me, I will return your call, or I will respond to your emails this evening—but I feel something is missing. So that's how much cellphones have become a big role in our lives.

We're looking forward to getting this bill to the committee so that we can move forward and listen to the folks, like I said before, listen to people who want to make contributions at committee for some of the things we may not have covered during this debate.

I thank you very much, Speaker, and again, I look forward to seeing this bill in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened attentively to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. The reason I'm sort of choked up is, I was surprised that his normal critic, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton—they've been struggling on the insurance file and talking about competition, and it was more or less a compliment to the member from Elgin–Middle–London in his remarks.

A couple of things that I agreed with: the member from Elgin's comment with respect to plain language. That, of course, is one of the objectives here. I should say for the viewer here that this is kind of a moot point, but in the program motion of last week that was voted on, Bill 60 is referred to a committee and it's time-allocated, so all of this thing that talk is about time—it's going to

go to committee. That's been predetermined by that program motion.

So I think the point that's being made, though, is that competition—and that's the other point—should lead to lower rates. That's always been—our leader, Tim Hudak, espouses that virtue in almost every aspect.

But that seems to be the case: The federal government has complete control of that file. Nothing in this bill has anything to do with that. That's all under federal regulation of the CRTC.

We've talked about this from about 2011 when it was introduced by David Orazietti, so there has been more said than has actually been done. I'd say that, if they hadn't prorogued the House, of course, this thing would have been law by now. I don't know why they're dragging their feet on it so much. But, nonetheless, our leader had the—"Let's clear the deck here and get on with business." So we support it. It's protection for consumers.

The member from Brampton West: Your remarks there earlier today were encouraging. Thank you for the work. It's too bad you left your phone at home.

Also, the other last little comment is that in normal circumstances, unless government intervenes, competition does lower price. That's something this government has never done, and I think it's long overdue, and the federal government is doing it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to stand here today, representing the constituents of London–Fanshawe on this bill and comment on the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London on his debate speech about this bill.

Technology has come so far and wide in our lives, and it's about time that this bill has been brought forward. The member from High Park—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: —Parkdale–High Park mentioned the size of a cellphone when they first came out. They were as big as bricks, and they were as heavy as bricks. The cost of them was phenomenal. They were really expensive. As technologies progress, we now see much sleeker cellphones. They're very light; you can put them in your pocket. The use of them and the functions they have are endless, to some degree.

1600

We do need to have this bill passed to make sure there are contracts with plain language, because when we enter into these cellphone contracts, we are making a commitment. If we don't understand explicitly what our commitment is to that contract, and what's more important, what the provider's commitment is to us, that's where people get frustrated. They don't think they're getting the service they need or the service they bought or what they signed up for. You know: "I didn't know I could get this for less cost," or, "I didn't know this would cost me so much when I wanted to cancel." So it's really important to make sure that people understand the contract language—it's plain; it's explainable to them—and they

don't feel they're entering into something they weren't prepared to do if they knew what all the terms were.

I'm glad to see that this was brought forward, but I do think it needs to go to committee so we can make sure that the consumers benefit from this bill with wireless contracts.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. We return to the member for London—Middlesex—sorry—Elgin—Middlesex—London for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It all works at the end of the day, Speaker. Thanks very much.

I'd like to thank those who commented on my debate: the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton, an excellent lawyer who made some remarks; Brampton West, sorry about your phone, but it will be there when you get home; the member from Durham, one of the leading thought-provoking conversationalists of our party; and, of course, my neighbour in London—Fanshawe, thank you very much for those comments.

I think the key point of this is that much of this legislation is overlapping what's happening at the federal level. I think we could have taken this bill and strengthened where the weak parts are in the federal legislation in order to ensure that our consumers are protected.

As I said before, overall I think the federal government should be looking further at trying to increase competition in the wireless marketplace so that we can have rates coming down. It's interesting to note that when government gets in the way—much in the paper today to do with usage-based telematics for the auto insurance product. What's really stopping this product from hitting the market full steam is, of course, our provincial regulator, FSCO. I know they do have to make the regulatory body in order to protect the consumer, but they've been working on this issue for over two years now and only one major company has been allowed, really, to bring this product out in the marketplace. I feel that giving that new option, which introduces competition in the auto insurance market, will help reduce rates while of course protecting the consumer.

But anyway, back to wireless rates, I'm just going to give a plug. I just hope everybody doesn't give up on Canadian-owned BlackBerry, a strong company, which most of us do have and use. Hopefully, 10 years down the road we still have a BlackBerry product that we're using, and that the Ontario Legislature does not give up on this product and ensures that all MPPs are using the BlackBerry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, there having been almost 6.5 hours of debate on Bill 60, I'm now required to put the question.

On September 10, Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of Bill 60. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I have received a deferral notice from the chief government whip asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow during the time for deferred votes.

Second reading vote deferred.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 2, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I must warn my friends in North Bay to settle in and settle down and relax on the couch for an hour because I'm going to be talking for one hour, Speaker. I just wanted to let Patty know, and let my mum at home know as well: You're going to listen to your boy for an hour.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Put the kettle on.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Put the kettle on, precisely.

I rise to address Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, the government's employer health tax legislation. I'm going to come out guns blazing. It would be more aptly named the "supporting small business while we stick it to them 100 other ways act."

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Zing.

Over the course of the next hour, I will be outlining the framework of the destructive policies this government has implemented over the last 10 years which have made this the lost decade. I'd like to point out that it was a PC government which first introduced this exemption as a way to assist small business in this province by reducing the overall tax burden. The Liberals have had 10 years to offer relief to small business, but only now are they acting. Quite frankly, it's too little too late.

For me and for my caucus colleagues, this legislation introduced today exemplifies exactly what is wrong with this government and their approach to governing. They're unwilling to go far enough to take the decisive action that is needed to provide real tax relief for Ontario businesses. This is more what I like to call tinkering around the edges by this government. It will not do enough to solve the jobs crisis that is so prevalent in this province and get the more than half a million men and women who woke up this morning without a job back to work.

We need to put this legislation in context with the overall framework that this government has laid out, which is actually driving jobs away and hurting business. It's driving investment out of Ontario; they're fleeing for

more friendly places to do business. This bill fails to address the structural costs facing job creators.

In order to talk about why this is not sufficient, I think we need to understand the problem that we have in Ontario, Speaker. I am going to read a couple of op-ed pieces that I have written that have been published in most newspapers in Ontario. This one is almost a year old but it starts with the quote, "I do not want Ontario to become like California," and that's a statement by Dwight Duncan, former finance minister, September 20, 2012. It's about a year ago he said that. The article that ran in many newspapers, from the Windsor Star to the Kingston Whig-Standard, is called "California Dreaming, Ontario's Nightmare."

It says, "The dismal financial situations facing Ontario and California are clearly compared in" several "recently released" studies. "Both jurisdictions have crushing deficits of" comparable size. "Sadly for us, California is about three times our size, making it a fiscal darling compared to us."

"After reading many similar articles," my wife Patty and "I headed to California to see firsthand what Ontario might look like in the near future."

"My wife Patty and I have many fond memories of our trips through California. You can imagine our surprise this trip at the sight of garbage piling up along the highway between San Francisco and Stockton, the city that joined San Bernardino and Vallejo in declaring bankruptcy. These three are the tip of the iceberg; many more cities are teetering on the edge."

"Assigning blame for California's problems depends on which side of the political spectrum you fall. The right points the finger at high public sector wages and generous pensions and benefits." Sounds familiar in Ontario. "The left blames the bursting of the real estate bubble. What cannot be disputed is the fact that the cities in bankruptcy overspent. When assessments fell, revenues fell—and they couldn't pay their bills."

1610

According to Michael Lewis's book *Boomerang*—a book that I would highly recommend to all of us in this Legislature—Vallejo is the city to pity most. Patty and I drove through this community.

"The lobby of city hall is completely empty. It's just a collection of empty cubicles. Eighty per cent of the city's budget—and the lion's share of the claims that had thrown it into bankruptcy—were wrapped up in pay and benefits."

"Now, the city manager runs the entire city of 116,000 with a staff of one. 'When she goes out to the bathroom, she has to lock the door'" of city hall.

"On our trip, we passed hundreds of wind turbines as we drove to the historic community of Sonora. This is the heart of gold country, established in the original gold rush of 1849," a place where I have panned for gold for the last 25 years. "Today, thanks to expensive energy, the mines are closed and the logging operations are silent. Museums were closed because of staffing cuts. The streets were empty. But we did see was a lot of casinos!"

The comparison to Ontario is inevitable. "Mine processors here have closed—Xstrata Copper in Timmins shed 670 employees and moved to Quebec for cheaper power. We were the number one mining jurisdiction in the world; today, we've fallen to" number 17. "The forestry sector is devastated—there are 60 closed mills today." That's 80% of all of the mills." The Far North Act has banned logging and mining exploration from another 225,000 square kilometres of land.

"As in California, wind turbines are popping up in rural Ontario. But our turbines are offered ... the highest subsidies in the world. This has caused energy rates in Ontario to rise to the second-highest in North America behind PEI."

"The Liberals have cancelled the Slots at Racetracks Program, which netted the province \$1.2 billion annually," opting to sprinkle 29 casinos throughout Ontario. In my op-ed, I asked this simple question: "Is that the best we can do?"

"We have 600,000 unemployed in Ontario today. There are 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs. These people need hope, not another short-term money grab by a government unable to control its tax-and-spend ways."

"California used to be the ultimate realization of the American dream. Similarly, Ontario was once the engine of Confederation. Both have fallen on hard times, but as usual California is leading the way. If we heed the warning of Stockton, San Bernardino, Vallejo and many other cities on the verge of bankruptcy, Ontario can lead again."

"And we can avoid turning the nightmare into reality."

That was the first of the op-eds that I wrote. I'm going to read a couple more shortly, but I want to take some time to talk about why this minuscule movement, this Bill 105 on behalf of the Liberals toward helping small business, isn't nearly enough to reverse the damage they've done over the last decade.

I'd like to start off by discussing our debt, which has doubled in just 10 years. It took 20-some Premiers 136 years to run up a debt of \$139 billion. Today, with only 10 years under their belt, the Liberals have doubled that debt to \$273 billion. It's at a record level. The deficit has pushed the envelope.

It's a must that the budget be balanced, and that we get it balanced before 2017. It's a must that Ontarians finally get a break in our tax rates, and that we get out of the business of corporate welfare. We must advocate for free trade and make sure that happens.

Our Paths to Prosperity, of which we have 14 versions, from health to education to energy and everything in between, must be a two-way street. Those 200 ideas—we must have some give and some take. As PC finance critic, I see a road back—a road that won't be easy, but it can be travelled, and we will travel it as a team that wants nothing but the best for Ontario.

We on this side of the House want Ontarians to be proud again. We want Ontarians to be working, and working in jobs that bring personal pride as well as a decent income.

This legislation comes at a time when we're struggling with skyrocketing hydro costs. Our hydro rates have doubled under this government. We have new taxes. We have increases to the WSIB premiums, another tax this year, and a College of Trades tax, another tax this year. I'll be talking a little bit more about both of those in a moment.

We have restrictions on the skilled trades through outdated apprenticeship ratios, and a forest of red tape and regulations that strangle the ability of Ontario businesses to prosper.

Again, Speaker, it's hard for us to talk about the things we want to go ahead and do in Ontario and why our white papers have the types of discussion papers in them if you don't understand how very serious our crisis is.

A moment ago, I read my op-ed piece about California, when so many national organizations compared us to California. Now I'd like to read my op-ed piece that ran, again, from one end of the province to the other and all through the north. This one is going to be the next crisis that we talk about, and I called this op-ed piece "My Big Fat Greek Ontario Government."

I sat through the new Liberal government's first budget, and all I can say is, "Opa!" We may well be on our way to a Greek-style meltdown.

"You don't need to be an economist" named Drummond "to know that Ontario is where Greece was in the 1980s. From 1984-94"—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I know this might be a little complicated for you, but I ask you to listen—"Greece's net debt-to-GDP ratio went from 37% to 66%. Today, Ontario is at 37% and if we maintain our current spending rate, we too will reach 66% by 2019."

The Drummond report "was a siren call to Ontario: Fix this now or it will destroy you. Instead, last year we saw spending actually up \$3.6 billion, while revenue was up only \$2.6 billion." Remember, this was a year ago when this op-ed ran. "We definitely don't have a revenue problem in Ontario; we have a spending problem.

"Our debt is not a function of the global recession or tsunami, as I continue to hear in the Legislature. It's the refusal of the government to control spending, and their lack of political will to balance the budget. Low interest rates make carrying this large debt possible, but even the slightest increase in rates" will cause trauma for the budget.

I recently attended a luncheon where speaker Niels Veldhuis presented Ontarian's Debt: Surpassing California, Heading for Greece. "He told us that over the last nine years, our GDP was up 3.3% while our program spending went up 6.6%. Had we just matched our spending to the GDP rate"—again, this is a year old—"last year's budget would have been \$91 billion instead of \$115 billion—and yes, that would have meant a surplus as opposed to a deficit.

"The solutions to Ontario's problems aren't hard to figure out; they're just not easy to do. Ontario needs a government that has a plan to reduce spending and create

jobs, and the courage to implement it. But it's hard to justify these tough decisions if people don't know how serious the problem is here in Ontario.

"The budget presented to Ontarians offers no reform, shows no sense of understanding the severity of our debt crisis, or the urgency required to fix the problem." It appears Ontario is headed to become the next Greek tragedy.

Let's look at energy rates and what has happened, especially given that today is the three-year anniversary of the Oakville power plant cancellation. We on this side are most eager to see what the Auditor General has to say tomorrow, as are Ontarians struggling with their hydro bill to be able to calculate how much this is going to send your hydro bills up on November 1.

1620

Ontario's industrial rates are the second-highest in North America. The global adjustment charge is simply the government's catch-all fund for the misdeeds and mistakes they've made in the energy file, including the power plant cancellations. This has hit a record. Last month, global adjustment hit 8.72 cents a kilowatt hour. That's not the price of energy; that's just the extra price for the spilling of water over Niagara Falls, the venting of steam out of the nuclear plants, to allow the wind to come online whenever it does get made—8.72 cents a kilowatt hour, just the extra. Add that to your energy rate.

When these guys took power, Speaker, entire energy was only 4.4 cents a kilowatt hour. Now the global adjustment itself is twice that amount, never mind the price of energy. Energy rates surpass taxes as the number one concern of Ontario businesses for the first time ever.

Let me take a bit of time to specifically address the Green Energy Act and how this legislation can't possibly do enough to reverse the damage done since it came into existence over four years ago.

First of all, Speaker, let me tell you that the Liberals have a great way of naming their bills. Of course, this one, aptly, as I said, is named the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It should be called the "supporting small business while we stick it to them 100 other ways act." They have a great way of naming their acts.

The Green Energy Act: There is absolutely nothing—zero, nothing—green about the Green Energy Act.

Speaker, when you and I grew up in our Ontario—both of us are from northern Ontario—we know that water power played a significant role in our energy portfolio. I can tell you that water power, when the Green Energy Act was first implemented, was 25% of all of the energy in Ontario. Some 25% of all of our energy came from water power. Now, that is the cleanest, the greenest, the most reliable, unlike wind, and the most affordable, unlike wind. That has now fallen from 25% to 22%, and wind power has gone from 0% to 3%. Our green energy years ago, when this thing started, was 25%; that's how much renewable we had. Today, after all of these billions of dollars that this government has wasted, we still have—surprise—25% of our energy that comes from renewable green energy.

So what's so green about the Green Energy Act when it did not create one megawatt—not one kilowatt—of new green energy for Ontario? Again, they have a great way of naming this.

But the worst thing about all this is wind power, which is so unreliable. We pay for 1,800 megawatts of power to be made from wind. Two weeks ago, at 9 o'clock in the morning—again, we pay billions of dollars for 1,817 megawatts—we made two megawatts of wind. Thank God we weren't relying on that power. By 11 o'clock, it had roared all the way up to three megawatts of power. Again, we pay for 1,817 megawatts.

The folly of this ill-named act is also that not only do we pay the richest subsidy; we also tell these wind producers that we will pay them whenever their power is made. The Auditor General told us that one of the flaws in this whole Green Energy Act is that there was no business plan done. It was forced by former Energy Minister George Smitherman on his caucus and his cabinet, much to their surprise, but no business plan was done. Had they done a business plan, they would have acknowledged and they would have understood that wind power is made at night, and in Ontario that's power we don't need at night.

So what do we do? According to the Auditor General, for the first 10 months in 2011 we paid \$420 million to Quebec and the States to take that wind power that was made at night. It's up to \$500 million a year. It averages \$500 million a year. That goes in that global adjustment, that 8.72 cents a kilowatt hour. That's a heck of a pile of money, considering power used to be 4.4 cents.

Now we've got half a million dollars a year that we're paying to Quebec and the United States, but every once in a while, at noon, the wind does blow and blow it does, and what do we have to do? We have to take that power. Even though we've already contracted for nuclear and water for that day, we have to take that power. What has happened is, the government makes the phone call to OPG down at Niagara Falls and tells them, "Spill your water over Niagara Falls and don't capture any of that power." How much did it cost us last year to spill water? It cost us \$300 million to spill water over Niagara Falls last year without capturing the power. Why? Because we had to take the wind power because wind happened to be made that day.

Now, when it really blows and we can't spill any more water, we commit the ultimate sin. We call our nuclear plants and tell them to vent their steam. They've used that nuclear power to boil that water, make the steam—and instead of powering a generator, vent that steam out into the atmosphere. That's what they're ordered to do. They were ordered five times last year. Do you know how much that cost us, Speaker? We paid \$80 million for that steam that was vented out the door. There's \$500 million. There's \$300 million. There's \$80 million. That's almost \$1 billion itself—almost \$1 billion itself in wasted money that goes on your global adjustment to try to make up for the flaws of this wind power folly, never mind the rich subsidy we pay.

But what are the consequences of that? Why am I telling you that? It's money, yes. Your hydro bill—all of you in the gallery—your hydro bill doubled under this government. It doubled. It went from 4.4 cents to 8.8 cents a year ago, and it's going up again in November.

But it didn't do just that. We didn't just spill water and vent steam. We drained jobs. Let me tell you an example. The Auditor General told us that for every one job that's created in the so-called green energy, we lost almost three jobs—some references are more—in other businesses whose power went up. Xstrata Copper in Timmins is the classic example. This is a company that's been there for decades. They're processing copper.

Mr. Bill Walker: The biggest consumer—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: They're the single largest consumer of power in all of Ontario—300 megawatts—bigger than any car plant in southern Ontario, any mine—300 megawatts. Remember, we pay Quebec a couple of cents to take our power, every megawatt. They knock on Xstrata Cooper's door and say, "Why are you guys still in Ontario? Why don't you cross the border 70 kilometres away for cheap power?" You know what? They did that. They crossed the border, moved into Quebec, 115 kilometres over the border, and reopened there. They shed 672 jobs in a community of 45,000 people. They then tore the building down so they don't even pay property taxes there. Can you blame them? This so-called green energy is like opening a treasure chest and telling the people, "Just dig in. Dig into the coins." It's such a rich subsidy.

Solar: That's another story when it comes to rich subsidies, Speaker. But last year, as I said, energy rates surpassed taxes as the number one concern of Ontario businesses for the first time.

This legislation will do little to bring back the 300,000 manufacturing jobs that we've lost in Ontario under this Liberal government. If we continue with this Liberal government's energy policies, those 300,000 jobs won't be coming back. As I said, our industrial rates are the second-highest in North America, but we need to make energy—affordable energy—a priority in Ontario and we will cancel the FIT program and the costly subsidies. The PCs will implement an industrial and a resource energy rate. That's how we're going to put people back to work. We're going to do it with affordable energy.

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You've already heard me talk about how this legislation does very little for small business. It tinkers at the edges. The real problem is that they're not addressing the issues that have caused these 300,000 job losses—the WSIB new tax.

You've got new taxes all around. You've got the College of Trades tax. Let me tell you a story about the College of Trades tax. This is a really scary story, Speaker. I will not tell you the name of the community or the name of the person, but I have received an email from this person. With their blessing, I can tell the story, but when you hear the story you'll know why I can't use their name or the city.

He's a barber in a small community in my riding, and so he is the only barber in that town. He does not want his town even mentioned because the College of Trades will know it's him.

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's not my town. My town is North Bay and we have several barbers.

He was cutting the hair of a friend of mine and two of the College of Trades people came in and interrupted the haircut.

Interjection: The trades cops.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: The trades cops, in uniform, with their marked car outside, came in and spent 10 minutes in the middle of this barber's haircut—as I said, with a friend of mine—demanding to talk to him about paying his College of Trades tax.

The College of Trades, as we know, is nothing more than a tax grab. It does absolutely nothing. They take the cash from the trades—from hairdressers, from barbers, from contractors, from all of the trades—to pay themselves. It's a self-funding organization. It serves no other role than a tax grab of Ontarians.

I have had the Chamber of Commerce support this, come into my office, sign a pledge with me and witness my pledge that I signed to cancel the College of Trades tax, because that's what's killing business—one of the litany of Liberal programs that is killing business in Ontario. That's what's wrong with Ontario, not tinkering on the edges with this Bill 105.

Speaker, another tax that was implemented this year is the WSIB. Do you remember that? I think it was Bill 119 or 191—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Bill 119, in the last Legislature. What this government has done is somehow put yet another tax on hardworking men and women in the construction trades. This WSIB tax is now a tax on the family-owned businesses where it could be—

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a payroll tax.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It's a payroll tax, in essence. It's for the owner and their spouse. This is a tax that they didn't have to pay before, but now they're forced to pay WSIB for themselves.

Now, let me tell you, Speaker, every one of these owners—and all have lined up in my office—would have had huge insurance policies for themselves because they know that if they get hurt on the job, they're not going to be able to work, and when they don't work, they don't have any revenue. So they have been funding their own excellent insurance policies and premiums for decades.

Now, this little piddly one comes along that bugs them for another \$1,000 or up to \$10,000 that they're paying for inadequate insurance. They can't let their own premium go. They've paid into it for too long and it's much better. This WSIB is not adequate for them as the owner, but now they're forced. Their arm is twisted and put behind their back to pay that additional tax.

I had an entourage of them come into our office as well, and all asked us to fix the WSIB folly. That's

another area that we believe is action to put these 300,000 men and women back to work, not this tinkering around the edges that we're seeing. It's pitiful to see that, Speaker, I have to tell you. I'm very disappointed—tax after tax after tax.

Two budgets ago, the business community was looking forward to the reduction in corporate tax from 11.5% down to 10%. What happened? Cancelled.

This government has absolutely no idea how to govern without raising taxes. I can tell you, in the gas plant scandal files the one document that really caught my eye was the Big Move, and what their default action was to pay for the \$50 billion worth of transit and infrastructure expenditures that are necessary between Toronto and Hamilton. They need \$50 billion over the next two decades or two and a half decades, \$2 billion a year. What is their absolute immediate go-to response? Raise taxes.

Not only did their agency suggest that they add 1% to the HST and add five cents a litre to every litre of gas that you purchase, as if those weren't enough and bad enough, now we've got, in the gas plant scandal, documents from finance and treasury—we read, in this Legislature, the list of some of these expenses, or some of these new taxes. They want to add 75 cents to your phone bill as a tax to pay for Toronto and Hamilton transit. They continue to deny all these.

One of them was that we're going to raise driver licence fees. Of course that happened a couple of weeks ago. Deny one day, implement the next, that's what we've seen from this government for far too long now.

They want to raise hunting and fishing licences, the fees for hunting and fishing, which is particularly hard on the northern community. That's what they want to raise to pay for Toronto and Hamilton transit. Their immediate go-to is, "Which taxes can we get away with raising?"

Mr. John O'Toole: Driver licences.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: It was driver licences, as I've mentioned. They did that. They did implement that. Right?

Their reaction was not, "Where can we look for efficiencies?" In this almost \$140-billion budget, you think you can't find not even 2%—\$2 billion—1.5%? You can't even find that in that budget?

Your reaction was to simply raise taxes. That's all they know how to do. Tax and spend. Tax and spend. That's all they know what to do.

Mr. John O'Toole: No; spend and then tax.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My fellow caucus member is right. In their case, it's spend and then tax, which is why, of course, we continue to have these deficits.

The legislation, Bill 105, that they're proposing, cannot possibly reverse the 10 years of wasteful spending and scandal that we've seen on this side. Perhaps if the government was more interested in helping small business than putting the Liberal Party's interests first, we could have seen more from them by now.

This legislation will do absolutely nothing, Speaker—nothing—to undo the \$1 billion that was wasted on

eHealth. This is a classic example of the kind of waste that we see from this government.

I don't hear anybody balking. They can't even deny that, Speaker. I enjoy the silence. They can't even deny that. It's \$1 billion that was wasted.

I wonder if the other members could come up with a list of what that \$1 billion could have bought us, how many MRI—never mind MRI procedures—how many MRIs this could have bought for Ontario. It's shocking.

We should have looked at that, and we should have known what to expect. That was early on in their government. We should have known that something's not right. Something's not right.

I'll jump to a more recent scandal, the Ornge scandal. In this case, we've seen human tragedy as a result of it. We've seen that, and it's a very sad scandal. But we've seen greed at the highest level. If you peel back how that came, you would understand it's all about their entitlements, and I'm going to talk a little bit more about that because, sadly, Speaker, this Bill 105 will do absolutely nothing.

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It's called the Supporting Small Businesses Act, and, Speaker, it does anything but support small business. In fact, if you look at the full package of Liberal policies, they're killing small business. They're killing big business. They're sending the Xstrata Coppers out of Ontario into Quebec. They're killing us.

Ornge is a classic example of the entitlement that they feel. Their fellow cousin, the former federal Liberal member Mr. Dingwall, said it best: "I am entitled to my entitlements." They live by that mantra, Speaker. I know they do. We're going to see a long litany of that coming up.

Bill 105 certainly can't go back and undo the disastrous decisions to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville power plants at a cost of \$585 million and rising. So, Speaker, I'm going to spend a few minutes talking about what that has done to small business, because tomorrow, when the auditor comes out with her number, we are going to have to get out a rather large calculator and see exactly what this is going to do to the business community, because we know the government here stands by their number. "It's \$40 million." In fact, we have sworn testimony. We have ministers who have stood in this Legislature and pointed their finger at us and said that the total cost of closing Oakville is \$40 million, and they rubbed their finger in our noses. "The total cost is \$40 million." Well, Speaker, the Auditor General will tell us the number. But in the meantime, the OPA has given us yet another number. It's a little different than this \$40 million that they swear. The Auditor General—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the government members to please come to order so that I can hear the member for Nipissing.

I return to the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Oakville, come to order.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Point of order, Speaker: I think we've all been quite patient on this side, but it would be nice if the speaker stuck to Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Auditor General tomorrow will tell us the true cost, the real cost. We've heard the \$40 million; we've heard that \$40 million. We've heard them swear in testimony on that number. Now, the Ontario Power Authority came out with their number, and it's \$1.1 billion, minus \$700 million in anticipated savings, equals \$310 million. So their bare number is \$310 million. We'll see how much of those savings the Auditor General comes up with, and see what of those savings she says don't qualify, and we'll learn the true number because that true number is going to show up on our hydro bills.

Speaker, when you talk about Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, we've got a few things that can support small business. Come clean on the Oakville and Mississauga total so that we can now have you fess up and tell the business community and hard-working families in Ontario how much more their hydro bill is going to go up, because this extra cost to cancel Oakville is going to go into our global adjustment, as it's going to be presumably paid by the OPA, and that's going to raise our hydro rates. That does not help small business. That does not help any business. It does not help large business. It's what drove the Xstrata Coppers away. It's what's hurting families, and that's why energy is the number one issue today—even more concern than taxes.

You want to help small business? Let's talk about the latest scandal, the Pan Am Games. Please tell me what it could possibly do to help our small business when you've got parking bills and coffee bills, \$700,000 for—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would indeed remind the House that this is a finance bill. Traditionally, in a leadoff speech on a finance bill, there's a little more latitude on the budgetary policy of the government, generally. At the same time, I must ask the member for Nipissing to come back to the subject of the bill from time to time, so as to ensure that the subject is being covered.

I return to the member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I have one paragraph left before I read the content of the bill, so I'll likely just finish off with that before I get back to it.

The \$700,000 for the athletes' village—I can go on and on, on this scandal. Again, it's built into this government: "I'm entitled to my entitlements." We hear that. We see that. We know that's in their very core, their very fibre, and does nothing to help small business.

For all of these reasons I've listed and so many others—some I still may circle back to—this legislation does little to improve the overall picture for small

business in Ontario and for our economy as a whole. Again, it's too little, too late.

I would like to address the specific content of the bill, which we do have some concerns with. The bill proposes to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years, with the amount to be adjusted for inflation for each year starting in 2019. While the intent is to help small business, it's about time that the Liberals realized their policies are killing Ontario business and this just isn't enough in the overall context of the legislation or the government's policies as a whole.

It also proposes to implement a new exemption threshold for companies with payrolls of \$5 million or more. This is almost a zero-sum game. The government says it will help 60,000 small businesses, but it will mean that 5,000 businesses—many family-owned like the local Canadian Tire in North Bay, the local family-owned Independent Grocer in North Bay—companies that create jobs, will pay more.

Further, this hurts the ability to compete in the global marketplace by adding to their input costs. It supplies special rules for registered charities and for a group of employers associated with the registered charities, but it allows the minister to make regulations providing for special rules that apply to employers who are, or are associated with, registered charities.

We have concerns, of course, about the minister's ability to make arbitrary changes, through regulations, around these charities. I would remind you of one other scandal I haven't yet talked about: the cricket club that asked for \$150,000 and the treasure chest was opened up and they were given \$1 million, right? This is what happens. This is just setting the table for another Liberal minister to change the rules to benefit themselves.

Speaker, I'm now going to read to you my third op-ed piece. This was a very recent one that ran in many papers in Ontario. It, too, helps us understand the significant disastrous and precarious position that Ontario Northland—I'm sorry; that's coming up—that Ontario is in. We can't begin to talk about the things we need to do to correct the path Ontario is on if people—especially the people across the aisle—do not fully appreciate, fully understand and fully acknowledge that we are in crisis in Ontario. This particular op-ed piece is called "Ontario's Check Engine Light is On."

"The recent bankruptcy of Detroit is another warning sign to Ontario that without hitting the brakes, we too are headed for a fiscal cliff.

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"Detroit, once the very symbol of industrial might, filed what will be the largest municipal bankruptcy in US history. Their budget deficit is more than \$380 million and their long-term debt is estimated to be \$20 billion.

"The motor city's population declined from a peak of 1.8 million in the 1950s to 700,000" recently. "There are 78,000 abandoned structures. Police, fire, and ambulance services are unreliable—their fleets are in disrepair, and police response times average 58 minutes.

"In a letter approving the move, Governor Rick Snyder wrote: 'The city's creditors, as well as its many dedicated public servants, deserve to know what promises the city can and will keep. The only way to do those things is to radically restructure the city.' He added the decision follows decades of decline for Detroit, 'a period in which reality was often ignored.'"

Speaker, I have to go back to this. "The only way to do those things is to radically restructure the city." We need a restructuring of our province. "The decision follows decades of decline for Detroit"—we have been in decline in Ontario: 600,000 unemployed today, 300,000 fewer jobs in manufacturing, and we have a bill that is going to hurt businesses—"a period in which reality was often ignored." Is that starting to sound familiar? There's no reality check here. None. They're in denial. They're in denial of the 600,000 people, the 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs.

"In many ways, Detroit is a warning light to the rest of the global economy, and especially to Ontario. Their debt is \$27,000 for each resident. In Ontario, we each owe \$20,000." Again, is that sounding familiar? "Detroit is estimated to owe \$9 billion for pensions and benefits. Here, our unfunded pension liability is estimated at \$100 billion; a problem that will only increase as baby boomers reach retirement.

"But the Detroit bankruptcy is only the latest warning sign that Ontario is headed down the wrong road. Over the last year, several studies have been released making other comparisons." I've read the studies out loud here.

"Ontario is now where Greece was in the 1980s. Their net debt-to-GDP ratio went from 37% to 66%. Today Ontario's is at 37%, and if we maintain the spending status quo, we too will reach 66% by 2019."

Speaker, as I read earlier, in my earlier op-ed, "Ontario and California also face similar dismal financial situations. Both jurisdictions have crushing deficits of comparable size. Sadly for us, California is about three times our size, making it a fiscal darling compared to us.

This party brought Don Drummond in to create a report and then put it on the shelf and didn't bother implementing many of the salient items, as we would do. "The Drummond report proved to us that the burden of eliminating our debt must fall on spending. It states, 'To balance the budget, the province must target a spending level in 2017-18 that is 17% lower than the sum found in the status quo scenario—a wrenching reduction from the path that spending is now on.'"

This is Don Drummond, the economist that the Liberals hired. They don't like what he had to say. They put it on the shelf and hoped that it would never see the light of day again. Instead of taking necessary action, the Liberals have taken us farther down the road with the same failed approach of the last decade.

"The solutions to Ontario's problems aren't hard to figure out—they're just not easy to do. Ontario needs a government that has a plan to reduce spending and create jobs, and the courage of their convictions to get the job done. Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs have put forward

bold ideas in a series of 14 white papers to date, and stand ready to lead Ontario back from the brink and into prosperity.”

I end with this op-ed piece with “Without structural changes, our economy will be running on fumes—and we all know what happens next.”

I want to say thank you very much to the many newspapers throughout Ontario that have run this particular op-ed in the last week, and to the dozens of newspapers that ran my earlier op-ed, “California Dreaming, Ontario’s Nightmare,” and my other op-ed, “My Big Fat Greek Ontario Government.”

Some people chuckle at comparing us to Greece, but it’s a compelling story, a story that Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, will do nothing to improve. This is going to admittedly assist some small businesses at the expense of slightly larger businesses. Again, in my hometown, the locally owned Canadian Tire will be affected. Our locally owned independent grocers will be affected. These are owned by men and women in the city. It’s like robbing one to pay the other. That’s what this is: It’s moving dollars around. It’s almost a net no gain, no loss.

I understand that, when all the math is done, it might cost the government about \$5 million. It’s not quite a wash, but it’s just moving money between one and the other, robbing Peter to pay Paul, which has happened with this Liberal government in almost all that we’ve seen. They need money? A WSIB tax. Tax those contractors. They make lots of money; let’s tax them.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They rob Peter; they don’t even bother paying Paul.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I sense a heckle from my own party, Speaker, from outside of the floor.

They need money? The College of Trades—let’s establish that, and let’s start taxing hairdressers and barbers. Let’s bully ourselves into their shop, interrupt the business that they’re doing, scare the person who’s in the chair and scare the people who are cutting their hair in our small towns in my riding.

It’s awful to see that their go-to is to raise taxes. It’s never, “How can we control our spending? How can we help Ontarians by bringing in a balanced budget?” It’s not about that. It’s all about—and I’m going to reverse the sentence, because it does work—“How can we spend, and then tax?” We’ve seen it in my short two years here. I have seen it over and over and over. They come up with great names for these bills, but I think that’s where they spent most of their time: on the name, and not the content. The content is tinkering at the edges.

It has done nothing. This will do nothing to put people to work. It will do nothing to help the people looking for work. It will do absolutely nothing for the 300,000 men and women who used to work in manufacturing. This is not going to lower hydro rates that we’ve seen double in the last decade. This isn’t going to fix the helicopters at Ornge. This isn’t going to correct the eHealth scandal. This is going to do nothing for the Green Energy Act.

This isn’t going to help these small businesses who looked at their tax bills and thought, “I remember hearing about a reduction in my taxes; how come that never happened?” It didn’t happen. They stayed where they were two budgets ago. They stayed where they were in the last budget.

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This isn’t going to do anything to control the expenses at the Pan Am. This isn’t going to help pay the 91 cents for parking and the \$1.89 for the Starbucks coffee. This is not going to do that. This is not going to help that. This is only going to hurt some businesses in an attempt to help others.

This is all wrong. This is backwards. This tinkers at the edges. There are serious issues that we have in Ontario, very serious issues. Companies across Canada are sitting on \$500 billion in cash in capital reserves they will not invest, and they will not invest it in Ontario. Why? Why won’t they do that? They don’t trust this government. They do not have any trust in a government that says, “I’m going to lower your taxes, but my fingers were crossed behind my back. I’m not going to lower your taxes.” They don’t trust a government who, when we saw great exploration in Ontario, up in the far north, when De Beers was producing the Victor Mine, and the government knocked on their door and said, “Oh by the way, we now have a diamond tax in Ontario.” De Beers said, “For heaven’s sake, in our business plan this was not the regime in Ontario.” There was no diamond tax in Ontario. They said, “Don’t worry. We’re only going to tax all the diamond companies.” There’s only the one.

Speaker, you look at the failing grade this government has on the Ring of Fire. It’s an obvious spot in Ontario for growth. We in Ontario can have unprecedented results by harnessing that Ring of Fire. I have had breakfast, lunch and/or dinner with all of the proponents up in the far North. You know what they say to me? What’s to stop this government from bringing in a chromite tax? That’s what is worrying them; that’s one of the many things that’s worrying them. They did it with the diamond tax. Who would have ever dreamt in a million years that you could open a diamond mine in Ontario and they’d snap their fingers and bring in a diamond tax. I’m telling you, this is the companies who are looking at exploration up there. This is those companies who are saying, “We don’t trust these guys. They’re going to bring in a chromite tax. Sure as the nose on your face, they’re going to bring in a chromite tax.”

Now let me tell you what else is ailing these companies. I had breakfast with one of the companies a short while ago—before the summer, actually—and said to them, “Now, last year, when I was up there you had 80 people working and you spent \$200 million on exploration.” That was to a lot of companies in North Bay. I’ve said this many times in the Legislature. When I first flew in there on my first trip ever, I saw the blue-and-white-striped tents, and a big smile came over my face because those tents are from my riding. That’s where they’re made. When I got a little closer and saw

that big mound of drill rods, I had an even bigger smile because we have 12 companies in my riding of Nipissing that make those—\$200 million they spent last year on exploration.

Do you know, I asked them, “How much are you spending this year? How many people are you hiring?” Zero. There’s nothing up there. They went from 80 to four people to mine the site. He said to me, “Why would we spend any more of our shareholders’ money delineating our ore body when we have no way to get the ore out?” This government has a failing grade. They have bungled that file, as well as many other files. They have bungled the most important file for northern Ontario, for our First Nations and for southern Ontario. Where do you think your ore and all your products are going to come from if you don’t go after this? They have bungled this.

Only the PC caucus has a real plan to put people back to work in Ontario, to restore economic growth and bring us back to our rightful place as the economic engine of Confederation. Only we on this side have a plan to free businesses from the tax and regulatory burden that this government has placed upon them so they can invest and create the jobs Ontarians deserve.

This legislation won’t do it. We here in the PC Party, this side of the House, will do that for you. Thank you very much for enjoying my hour speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That was quite an hour. I’d like to congratulate the member from Nipissing, although I would like to tell him that just because you call a white paper “bold” does not make it so.

But this bill in particular is moving in the right direction. This bill—and I’m going to speak to the bill. I know it’s a novel idea, but I’m going to speak to it—actually addresses the elimination of the loophole that allowed large companies to not pay the employee health tax on the first \$400,000 in payroll and also implements an increase in the exemption. Currently—just to get back on track—there is an exemption for paying the employee health tax on the first \$400,000 in an employer’s payroll. This applies to businesses with one employee or to large banks or large corporations. Some of those large corporations who got \$500,000—Maple Leaf Sports, actually, just this past week. I’m sure this will be the first time you’ve ever heard this, but the New Democrats agree with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation that that is corporate welfare. They do not need it, it did not make a big difference, and it is not helpful to small businesses.

Just to get back to what is actually beneficial to small businesses, though—and I’d just like to remind the chamber that the CFIB and the chamber and all small business groups support this change because they are looking for some relief. I think the member actually made some good points, though: It’s undetermined whether or not this would actually increase employees. Does this actually generate jobs?

Is it a progressive tax policy that at least is moving in the right direction? Yes. Will we be supporting it? Yes, because we choose to participate in this minority government and we choose to actually try to make a difference for small and medium-sized businesses, which have been largely left out of the equation for way too long.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened with great interest earlier to the member from Nipissing as he was providing us with his version of what has taken place over the last nine or 10 years here in the province of Ontario. What was interesting, as he was discussing at great length how the province hasn’t moved in the right direction—he was talking about lists as well, and he mentioned his riding.

I think it bears mentioning here in this House that over the last 10 years in North Bay, in the riding of Nipissing, the North Bay Regional Health Centre received a total increase in base funding of 131.5% since 2003.

In 2010, in that member’s riding, construction was completed on the North Bay Regional Health Centre. This government, because we believe passionately in investing in people and infrastructure, invested \$551 million in that particular hospital project.

Regarding wait times for health care, since 2004, North Bay General Hospital has received \$16 million to provide 27,000 additional procedures, reducing important wait times in the community of Nipissing. That means, for the people of that member’s community, cataract surgery being reduced by 354 days or 83%, outpatient CT scans by six days or 16%, and hip replacements are down by 250 days or 48%. Did I mention MRIs? Since our government took office in 2003, because we believe passionately, as I said, in investing in infrastructure, we have added one new MRI to North Bay General Hospital.

With respect to family health teams in his community, there are 14 new doctors and 18 new health care professionals providing care for over 20,000 new families.

This list goes on. What’s crucial in all of this is to remember that you can’t cut your way to prosperity. You can’t cut your way to building a stronger province. This Premier, this government, for 10 years have been investing in people, investing in infrastructure, and investing in supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate in communities like Vaughan and Nipissing. That’s why our province is headed in the right direction. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O’Toole: Yes, thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker. I was privileged to sit here this afternoon and listen to Mr. Fedeli, the member from Nipissing, our opposition critic for finance. I want to commend him personally for the detailed research that he provided for all members of the House here today of how scandalous this current government is in terms of its accountability to really be trusted.

1710

Bill 105, as he explained—and he explained it very well. He said this is really just shifting the revenue, to someone else paying. The cost of it all is going to be shifted to some other business. They really don't get the whole argument that he was making with respect to the scandal on the energy file that he spoke rather passionately about, as well as the other taxes they've levied without any excuse or any explanation—and still in debt at every turn. By every measure, they're in debt: \$22,000 per person in Ontario. That's the debt load. Even Don Drummond said, in the review he did, that we have a structural deficit.

You look at these poorly executed plans—and there's an important quotation that I think is very appropriate here: "Vision without action is a dream, but action without vision is a nightmare." That's exactly what you've done to Ontario.

Quite honestly, there's some value in the Green Energy Act and others, but if you look at the execution of the plan itself—you can't pay someone 80 cents for a product like solar and then sell it for five cents.

Really, the business plan or the risk assessment that was not done shows that this is a government—if they thought the gas plant was a wise move, why did they deceive the people of Ontario by saying it cost \$40 million? That's part of what—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask you to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw that.

I suspect that they just didn't explain to the people of Ontario the real cost for a political decision, and we're going to find out tomorrow what that was.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The issue here is that while the initiative and the name of the bill is encouraging, addressing the fact that we need to look at working towards improving the conditions of small businesses, simply putting that in the title of the bill doesn't actually create the conditions.

While I acknowledge that this bill does what we've asked the government to do for a number of years, there's a significant loophole. The way we treat a small business, like a local law firm—a shout-out to my colleagues in the legal field—or the way we treat small businesses—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Pharmacists.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: —like pharmacists, like our friend from Elgin–Middlesex–London, restaurants or other small businesses and the way we treat multinational corporations must inherently be different. Their circumstances are different. Their conditions are different. Their economies of scale are quite different. The fact that this government doesn't have a strategic way of addressing that difference and treating small businesses in a way that would encourage them and support them and create a climate in our province that would allow them to flourish is a strong indication that this government is failing at addressing the real needs of small businesses in Ontario.

While it's important to acknowledge that increasing the threshold from \$400,000 to \$450,000 will benefit some small businesses, this is certainly not what small businesses want in Ontario as a fulsome way of addressing their concerns. We must do much more if we're serious about creating a climate in Ontario which protects and supports and encourages more growth in the small business sector, which is something we must do moving forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for the questions and comments. I return to the member from Nipissing for his reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you to the members from Kitchener–Waterloo and Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I'll be going across there in a moment. Your mother will be proud. You handled this one gingerly.

I have to say, it's not large corporations, Speaker—when they speak of large corporations, it includes family-owned businesses, like our locally owned Canadian Tire, like our locally owned independent grocer. That's who will be adversely affected by this.

To the member from Vaughan, thank you very much for your comments as well. The member from Vaughan has talked to me about how you can't cut your way to prosperity. He spent a lot of time talking about the North Bay hospital. I would ask, if you can't, then why would the North Bay hospital have recently fired more than 40 nurses? I would ask the question to the member for Vaughan over there. Also, he talked about the amount of MRIs that are given in North Bay. I would ask the member for Vaughan, how many MRIs are provided at the hospital in Vaughan? Oh, that's right; he hasn't brought up the hospital in Vaughan. That's correct.

Speaker, I say to you, this legislation is more proof that this government simply isn't capable of taking the decisive action that's needed to get our province turned around and headed in the right direction. When you look at this bill in the overall context of the direction of this government, it simply isn't close to going far enough. That's why we need change here at Queen's Park. That's why, over the last hour, I've talked about the things that they have done and done wrong—so very, very wrong—and the things that our party would do. I would encourage the people to go to ontariopc.com and look up our 14 white papers, and you'll understand what we mean by bold change for Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this afternoon. From the outset, let me say that I'll be sharing my time with the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

We all come to this House from different backgrounds, and I think that's a good thing for the people of Ontario. As we pass legislation in this House or as we take a certain perspective on legislation in this House, I think the fact that we all come from different places is a good thing.

I happen to come from a small business background. I have worked in small business in my life, for sure, and found that the entrepreneurship route was the way that I wanted to go in my own personal career. I started a very small business and grew it into a fairly nice-sized business, and when I was elected to Queen's Park I decided that I was going to sell that business. It's great to see that that business is still operating and thriving in the town of Oakville and has created even further jobs.

I think that bringing a small business background to the table leads me to take a different approach when I talk to people in my own community of Oakville and when I'm talking to the chamber of commerce, for example, and as much as we like to celebrate when we get a big opening in our community, when we have something like a Ford investment—we just made a record investment in Ford that's going to ensure that the Ford plant in Oakville, in my community, guarantees about 3,000 jobs for the next decade. That's something that I think is really important in the auto economy, which is a fluctuating business globally.

Despite the gloomy outlook of the member from Nipissing, who just spoke, Ontario remains the number one jurisdiction when it comes to auto manufacturing in the entire North American continent. He seemed to dwell on a lot of the negative aspects, from his perspective, of what's happening in Ontario's economy, and at the end of the speech left me with the impression that he and his party will not be supporting the reforms that are being announced in Bill 105. I think that's a shame.

Certainly, from somebody who, as I said, came from a small business background, you start with an idea. You usually start with a very minimal investment of your own that you can scrape up and you go to the bank; sometimes you have to rely on the banks. Often, you go through periods of time, as you're developing and growing that industry, where the rent is getting paid and the suppliers are getting paid and the employees are getting paid, but there are days and weeks and often months where you, as the owner, are not getting paid. Still, the value of doing that is something that makes people persevere. The independence that comes along with small business is something that I think people really treasure.

What they don't want is for government to stand in the way. They want government to assist. They want government to be helpful. Bill 105—putting on my small business hat—tells me that this government at Queen's Park today is one that is interested in being helpful and one that understands that the backbone of our economy is small businesses. Job growth comes from small businesses. It's people who come up with an idea, decide to take that chance and go out into the marketplace and say, "Here's a product. Here's a new idea. Here's a new way of doing things. I'm going to see if I can make something happen with that."

The reforms that are taking place under Bill 105 would help more than 60,000 of those small businesses to promote themselves, to promote jobs and growth, to reinvest capital and to hire more employees. For about

12,000 of those businesses, it means that they wouldn't pay the employer health tax at all.

1720

I think that when you're starting a business in Ontario, like I did, you look to the province as a place that you want to not only start a small business—and you can start a small business anywhere in the world, Speaker. But I think you want to start a small business in a community that has some of the values that you have.

Some of those values that I find in the province of Ontario: I think there's a value of having a very strong public education system. I come from a very affluent community. We have a lot of people in Oakville who have done very, very well in their careers. They earn very high incomes. Any time my community is ranked up against others, as they do across the country, Oakville invariably comes in the top five. Sometimes it's first; sometimes it's third; sometimes it's fifth. But I'll tell you, when I go around my community, you would think Oakville would be a community that values strong private education. It's often seen as that being where the rich people go. It's entirely the opposite, Speaker.

When I go around my community, what people value is public education, because quite often it's their public education that has allowed them to be successful individuals, that has allowed them to pursue careers or to move ahead, often from moderate means. Often these people have started from families that were just scraping by. They have been able to get a public education. They have been able to get into university or skills training or into a college, and they have been able to make something of themselves.

So what they want to see is a competitive economy, they want to see competitive tax rates, and they want to see a business climate where people are able to come forward with ideas and know that they will pay their fair share and know that they will have to follow certain rules and regulations when it comes to health and safety and to other things that I think you would like to see applied to your own family. If you've got people who work for a small business, you'd like to know that your children, for example, are working in small businesses where it's safe, where there are health and safety inspections. You'd like to know that they are being paid fairly, that the minimum wage is something that there has been a discussion about and that has been established at a fair rate. So you'd like to live, I think, in a community that's inviting to business but has a regulatory framework that allows that society to exist in a way that is also good for that society and for people to live in.

I think this bill, Bill 105, is an incremental approach to what we've been trying to do when we took over, and that is, we've been trying to take our tax structure from one that, frankly, was uncompetitive, was one of the highest on the continent, was one of the highest, certainly, in the OECD. We've been able to make some changes now that have moved us from having one of the highest provincial general corporate income tax rates in the country to the third-lowest in the country now.

When we look at ourselves from an international perspective, our corporate income tax rate now is lower than the combined—in the States, it would be the federal/state corporate income tax rate. Ontario's rate is lower than any state in the union with our southern neighbours, and we know what they are going through now with the Tea Party movement and some of the thoughts that were alluded to by the previous speaker from Nipissing.

I just don't think that's the right way to go, Speaker. I think we can make a much better co-operative climate with the people who run our small businesses than is being described by the previous speaker.

The exemption, should this bill pass—and I understand, from what's being said, that the third party will be supporting this bill. I think that's a good thing, and I thank the third party for their support, because I think it is an act worth supporting. So the proposed bill should pass.

Despite the fact that the Conservatives are opposing this bill, I still think it's one that speaks to what needs to be done, not only today, but also in the future, because the exemption, should this proposed bill pass, will be indexed to inflation every five years. So a person starting a small business now will know that, as that business grows, if that business grows to a stable point where it's around the \$5-million payroll mark, and as time moves on, the business won't suddenly be thrust into a position where it's paying higher taxes—unless it booms to a point where it's paying more than \$5 million. So that's under \$5 million on the first \$450,000 of their payroll each and every year.

What that does is it's going to reduce the cost of hiring and it is going to bring down what I've heard talked about for the past 30 years in this House: the burden of what people like to call red tape. Sometimes I think that is quite justified, and sometimes I think that, frankly, the red tape is a red herring. I think you've got to be very selective as to what regulations you want to leave in place. There are good regulations, and there are regulations sometimes, I'll admit—and I think that all three parties in the past have been guilty of this—that are regulation for regulation's sake.

The previous speaker talked a little bit about the College of Trades, and I just wanted to end my remarks on that. The breadwinner in our family was my dad. My dad was a tradesperson. He was a steamfitter. He worked on all the nuclear plants in the province of Ontario—not all, but I think about three quarters of them, anyway. He was very proud of his profession, and he always thought that we should be attracting more people to those skilled trades. Often we devalue those skilled trades.

We as a government decided that the skilled trades, those professions, are as worthy of a college of their own, as worthy of self-regulation, as any other profession in this province. When you look at dentists, lawyers, teachers and nurses—you can go on and on—when I hear somebody say, "Well, those people can have it, but certainly an electrician couldn't have their own college.

They're not smart enough to run their own college," or, "A plumber couldn't possibly tell you anything about plumbing; that's got to be done by government," I take offence to that.

I think the College of Trades is one of the most progressive things this government has ever done. I think you'll see the work that has taken place so far on the apprenticeship ratios. Neither government—our government, nor the previous government, Speaker, of which you were a part—was able to move on those ratios. We were always being asked to. We were being asked by industry sometimes, and we were being asked by the unions sometimes. These guys have moved. They have moved quickly and they have moved fairly. Some of the ratios have gone up and some of them have gone down, but like Bill 105, it's an act that is supportive of this economy. It's a progressive approach, and I would urge the Conservative Party to change its mind and support Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank my friend from Oakville, Mr. Flynn, for sharing his time with me on Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013.

I would add, just to take up on his point about the College of Trades: The member who spoke from the opposition, the Conservative Party, referenced what's going on at the College of Trades as a tax increase. Of course, it is nothing of the sort. Every penny that is put onto the tradespeople goes into the college and stays in the college. None of that money comes into government. It's an incredibly important distinction, and I don't know why the member opposite would imply otherwise.

My colleague Mr. Flynn talked about starting his own business. Well, I grew up in a small family business, and I can tell you from that experience for nine years that it is absolutely in my DNA to do whatever I can to support small businesses in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I am very pleased when I see initiatives coming forward from our government here that do that very thing.

My parents, Jim and Doreen Mauro, built a small corner store in 1966 in Northwood, and that store was open 14 hours a day, 365 days a year, for nine years. I don't know how the hell they did it with four young kids, with the home built right onto the back of the store, but that experience framed all four of us as children, I can tell you very seriously. We know what it was to be a small business owner in this province and not have a pension plan, not have a paid holiday, not get a sick day. We understand it very clearly, and it's through that experience that I am pleased when I see initiatives like this come forward.

The member opposite spoke about this bill, and he did his level best to understate the significance of it. I think he did his level best to leave people that are following the debate with the impression that this is the only thing we've ever done when it comes to taxation and taxation reform. Well, I just made a few notes while I was listening to him speak, and let me just rhyme off for you

off the top of my head a few of the things that I could remember that we've done:

—a single sales tax, which that party used to be in favour of, and I would say is probably largely responsible for Ontario coming through the greatest recession since the Great Depression better than any other province in Canada and better than many other countries. One of the single biggest reasons, probably, that we've recovered 146% of the jobs lost in the recession may very well be the single sales tax. We did that;

—corporate income tax rates: my friend from Oakville talked about those;

—the marginal effective tax rate: he referenced those; and

—the small business tax rate, from 5.5% to 4.5% to 4%: an over 20% reduction in the small business tax rate. The member from Nipissing didn't talk about that.

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He didn't talk about the fact that we eliminated the capital tax completely on investment. It didn't matter if you were a small business owner in Ontario—when you invested, we taxed you on that, whether you made a profit or not. We've completely eliminated the capital tax on investment in business in Ontario. It's 100% gone.

Many people probably don't know that we lowered the personal income tax rate for them by 1% on the first \$37,000 that they earn. That's 1% on \$37,000. If you're a dual-income household and you're both making \$37,000 or more, that's \$740. By the time it flows through on your taxes, I don't know what you net, but it's a significant increase. That's another piece of our tax reform that the member opposite didn't talk about—or income splitting. I had a friend of mine stop me on the street two or three years ago, and he said, "Billy, I've got to thank you." I said, "What for?" He said, "Your income-splitting tax reform measure has just put X amount of money back in my pocket, and based upon that, I was able to have a nice little trip with my wife a couple of weeks ago." Nobody talks about that stuff anymore. We've brought so much significant tax reform in, it's remarkable.

There is one piece, Speaker, that I want to focus on a little bit, though, that we don't talk about much in this place at all. I talk about it every chance that I get, and that is what we in northern Ontario call the BET, business education tax. I want to thank NOACC in northwestern Ontario—the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce—who first brought this issue forward, I think, in the late 1990s, when the official opposition was in government. When we formed government in 2003, they continued to press this issue. What's the significance of the BET? Well, when local school boards used to have taxation powers, you would have this hopscotch across the province of different BET rates in different jurisdictions—depending on what they had done when it came to their bargaining over the years. I can tell you, in northern Ontario, northwestern Ontario specifically, the BET rates were the highest in all of Ontario—the business education tax on businesses.

What makes this more interesting—and I couldn't help but think about it when the member opposite from the official opposition was speaking—is that when NOACC, the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce, first started advocating on this issue in the late 1990s or early 2000s, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines at the time was the leader of the official opposition today, Mr. Hudak. They advocated to him on this particular issue, and nothing happened. The rates stayed the same. Businesses in northern Ontario were left with largely disproportionate business education tax rates.

In our budget of 2003 or 2004—I forgot exactly when we started it—we began a phase-down of the business education tax rates so that those businesses in northern Ontario could come down to the provincial average.

Somewhere around 2008, it stopped. Northern Ontario has been fully implemented. As a result of the recession, the rest of the province stopped. Northern Ontario has now been brought completely down to the provincial average. I'm a little fuzzy on the number, but it's somewhere in the order of magnitude of, \$20 million to \$40 million every year is now left in the pockets of businesses in northern Ontario as a result of that one tax reform, the business education tax reform—and I can't help but underline, after having to listen for an hour to some of the comments made by the member opposite, that that was an issue that they left hanging on the table and chose not to address.

He talked a fair bit about businesses and energy rates as well. I want to talk a little bit—I only have a couple of minutes left here. We worked very hard, as a northern Liberal caucus, on a program that's called the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate program, or NIER, as it may be known in northwestern Ontario. This program is very significant. The large industrials now in northern Ontario—we're talking about taxation. There are some of them, not all of them—it has been completely misrepresented in this Legislature for a very long time that our government had something to do with the collapse of forestry in northern Ontario or in all of Ontario. I've challenged people to a debate on that any time they want; I've never had a taker. They've tried to link what happened in forestry to rising energy rates. I still offer that challenge. I would be happy to debate anybody on that at any time—no takers.

But one of the things we did do to help forestry—and they were the canary in the coal mine, I would say, when the recession came in 2008. Because in northern Ontario, forestry first started to feel the effects around 2005, if not a little sooner, we brought in a program called NIERP, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program. I think that by helping to maintain those larger, I would say, forestry companies that managed to come through the recession—and we always knew the ones that could survive the recession would likely be the bigger ones, and they would be better positioned to survive on a longer term going forward.

We strongly believe that the northern energy rebate program is one of the reasons why, in my community of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Resolute is still there; why they've got 400 to 500 people still working for them; why they've just announced a \$50-million investment in Atikokan, a community in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan—a \$50-million greenfield for a new sawmill—and other investments going forward.

Speaker, there's a long list of pieces here. I only had nine or 10 minutes today to touch on some of them, but I want to thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to address Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to bring comments to the members from Oakville and Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and to speak about Bill 105, the small business act.

What the people in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound tell me every day that I'm on the street and out meeting with them is, they need things like less red tape, less administration; less reporting that does absolutely nothing to improve their business, to allow them to add more people on. What they're hearing is people are coming in every day, harassing them, asking for more, with nothing in return other than, "We need more paperwork," to really just get in their way and stop them being more innovative.

What we need is less focus on inspectors. Think of the skilled trades tax and those people out bullying, almost, small business owners, people like hairdressers, mechanics, plumbers, whose licence is their ability to earn their income for their family. What these folks come in and do is intimidate and threaten them that if they don't pay these added costs and these added taxes, they'll take their licence, which then negates their ability to make a living.

I give a prime example in rural Ontario of the abattoirs. What we saw under this government is them come in and add more regulation, more bureaucracy, more requests that, again, did nothing that actually helped that small business owner stay in business. In fact, it's proof that it has driven most of those small abattoirs right out of business. And anybody that's still in the business, the first thing they say to me is, "If I could sell this business tomorrow, it would be gone. And I'll never, ever encourage my kids"—that's disheartening in something that's so proud.

We need this government to stop tweaking around the edges, as they do with almost all the legislation. They're not looking at anything substantive; they're trying to tweak. We need them to stop the red tape and the bureaucracy and administration, the overburdening of red tape. If they want to support small business, what I would suggest is, try looking at actually lowering taxes, instead of bringing in new taxes. Reduce the red tape. Reduce the energy rates, which, again, have driven a lot of businesses out of our province to other places and abroad.

Speaker, they need to create a fair playing field and work with the chambers of commerce and federal independent business to create policies that will engage

and actually encourage people to expand the heartbeat of our economy: small business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to comment on the debate that we had for the members for Oakville and Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

This bill is something that the NDP talked about in the last budget session. Currently, right now—the Ontario employment health tax was a \$400,000 exemption for payroll, but it was for any business. You could have one employee, or a big national corporation like a bank. They could all write off the employment health tax.

We had suggested that that corporate tax loophole be closed for the bigger corporations, and we suggested that putting a payroll amount of \$5 million on there would continue to help the small business owners.

We're glad to see that the Liberals are actually implementing this bill to promote one of their promises that they made for closing corporate tax loopholes. I think this is a step in a direction that is going to help small business. That means that right now, for anybody who is a small business owner and has a \$5-million payroll, their first \$450,000 is going to be exempt for the employee health tax. It is going to make some difference to the small businesses.

But we can do better. We can do better for small business and give them better tools so that they can be more successful. We have to recognize that small business is different from multinational corporations, and they need different assistance in order to make sure they're successful. I think we've all heard that small business is the bread and butter of our communities, and they do stimulate our economy and they are the creators of jobs in our neighbourhoods.

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I find that this bill will be supportable, but I am interested to hear what the committee is going to have to say on some of the issues with respect to how it would affect small business at large.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: When I was listening to the member for Nipissing, I thought I was listening to the Republicans and the Tea Party down south—you know, to balance the budget, close the hospitals, fire nurses, eliminate full-day kindergarten, cut electricity rates to large business, and transfer the costs to all of you who are listening, if you are.

I was very disappointed, because—look at what's happening right now in the United States. I feel sorry for those who need the services. Of course, the billionaires over there don't need the services. They don't want the Obamacare, so that's why all of them are blocking the passage of the bill to pay their bills. It will help 44 million Americans; no, they don't want that. Because they have all that money, they can be passing those who are waiting for care, so they are jumping the queue. They like jumping the queue. They don't want anybody—44

million Americans. Think about it, all of you who are listening. Some 44 million of you—we don't have 44 million Canadians, but let's say just half of them would not have health care services. I was very sorry to hear that.

As you know, there is this party, the Conservative Party, which looks to the Republicans. I know that some of them go and help in the Republican elections. They want to bring that model here. We don't want that model, on this side of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here for some of the time that Thunder Bay–Atikokan spoke, and I'm convinced that he read the notes he was given, perfectly; I can assume that.

We're hearing now that most of the things that Bill 105—and you were replying to the member from Nipissing, when in fact you should have been replying to your own members—not to be kind of a lecturing type or mean-spirited.

Bill 105 has a laudable goal and objective, but you've got to look to the roots of where these things come from. This provision for an exemption was brought in by the Conservative government. We've been arguing for the last 10 years to ease the pressure on small business, and I think it was only through the work of our leader, Tim Hudak, that you've modestly moved forward on that attempt, so I will modestly give you some credit.

Here's the real issue: If you look at the bill—you've put in what I call the "poison pill" scenario. You've capped the amount that—your payroll can be at \$5 million, I believe the number is, which means a lot of the businesses don't qualify. The program is going to cost you a few dollars, but your revenue's not going to change because you're going to raise the tax from other businesses. That's what you're doing. You're shifting the barrier onto other businesses. That's what you're doing. If you don't get that, then you should do a little bit of research on your own bill.

I'm not specifically being critical of anyone, but when I listen to the remarks, it's quite clear that none of you have been properly briefed on the bill, because it doesn't do a thing. It shifts the tax burden to another group. The other group will now be paying more. This is the very problem, the root cause of Ontario's dilemma of having 300,000 families without an income.

I hope to have an opportunity in a few minutes to speak in more detail about the bill and the other part of the economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members has two minutes to reply. The member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, London–Fanshawe, Ottawa–Vanier and Durham for their comments.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound talked about less red tape. The single biggest initiative, probably, that has occurred in Ontario's history was the

creation of the single sales tax. That initiative alone eliminated thousands of pages of work and documents that businesses had to do—

Mr. Bill Walker: Not enough.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Well, nobody said there's not always more work to do. The point is that it was always a good idea. The Conservatives thought it was a good idea until we introduced it, and then they opposed it. I think it took about 1,000 employees off the payroll overnight.

When you talk about lower taxes—I'm not sure what the member's history was, if he was a city councillor or not, but I was for six years in Thunder Bay. If you want to talk about lowering taxes, how can you be in this place and not remember what the official opposition did to every municipality in the province of Ontario when you undertook what was probably the biggest tax hike, tax shift, in the history of this province? You downloaded on to the residential property tax base the responsibility for services that were, up to that point in the history of this province, the responsibility of the provincial government.

That's what you did. You had a \$5-billion hole in good economic times. You sold a highway for \$3 billion that was valued at \$11 billion to make the \$5 billion only \$5 billion; it would have been \$8 billion. You gave all those costs—another \$3 billion.

I talk about it when I'm in my community, Riverview Drive or Edward Street in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. If you live in Westfort or the east end, when you get your residential property tax bill out, thank a Conservative. We've been uploading those costs, combined uploads of Ontario municipal property fund and the uploads from your downloads to try to make the residential property tax bills a little more saleable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't want to debate the collapse because today, here, more has been said than done. Now, I do want to pick up with a fresh slate here and say that Bill 105 is a small start in the right direction, but it doesn't go nearly far enough in terms of making sure that we create jobs in the private sector. I always like to think of it this way. The member from Atikokan got off on the track there about the "who does what" and the election at least in 1995.

I was a councillor. In fact, I was chair of budget at the time. We came here under very similar circumstances as today, to be honest. Basically, back then, Bob Rae and Floyd Laughren—I met with them, along with other members—not just myself; there were quite a few people. Before the social contract—the NDP would remember this—they had a program put out by Ed Philip, who was the Minister of Municipal Affairs, that was called the expenditure reduction plan. That was the birth of the whole social contract. No one would agree with it because what they were doing was cutting the transfer payments. They were cutting the transfer payments at a time when municipalities were in the same dilemma they're in today—infrastructure and all the rest of it.

Liberals haven't fixed one bridge, really, to be quite honest about it. The one that the Premier had the picture taken at this weekend: She had to go into an arena—the bridge wasn't finished—to have the picture taken. I digress.

Here's the real issue. You've got to put things in perspective. Back then, under the left-wing government of Bob Rae, now a Liberal—but they're the same, really.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Same thing in a hurry.

Mr. John O'Toole: Just a Liberal in a hurry, is all it is. But the budget was \$48 billion, and the deficit was \$12 billion. The big thing that was killing them: The debt interest, the interest on the accumulated debt, was becoming the largest expenditure.

Where are we today, to bring this into Bill 105? Today, in Ontario, our budget is about \$120 billion. You have to ask yourself, "They've increased spending by about 60%. Is it any better?" No. They've got in a deeper hole than the NDP had.

Here's the issue: The expenditures in the province of Ontario, for the most part—about 50% of every dollar is wages somewhere in the system, okay? I didn't say that was bad. But you've got to realize that the structural component of your budget, if you're expanding the wage provisions faster than the growth of the economy, you're eventually in trouble.

Don Drummond said it right in this report that they have a structural deficit. This is the commission on reforming Ontario's public service, by Don Drummond—mandatory reading. In fact, there are 360 recommendations here. I'd encourage the people of Ontario: Don't let Charles Sousa, the Minister of Finance, or anyone else pull the wool over your eyes. We're seriously in the ditch.

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Here's the issue: Of the budget, the first and most important expenditure—we'd all agree with this—is health care. It's expanding faster than anything else, and in that there are subdivisions. The growth in the cost of drugs is 15% a year—not sustainable. No one wants to be cruel about it, but I have constituents who have applications in under the EAP, the Exceptional Access Program, dying of lung disease, dying of other diseases, they're going blind, and they can't get the drugs in Ontario today.

In fact, there was an article in the paper last week about how you now have to have a fundraiser to get the medication. It was in the media. One of the authors from the Toronto Star—I wish I had it with me. I have it in the office. I think it's a scandalous comment on the perilous state of health care in Ontario, which people agree with. They are cutting test strips for diabetics. They're limiting the number you can get now. They're cutting physiotherapy. The member today, our finance critic—

Ms. Soo Wong: Tell the truth.

Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon? Somebody over there said, "Tell the truth." I am telling the truth. Who was that? Stand up and speak. Set yourself free. You're a former nurse and you know the perilous state. Mr. Fedeli told us today, through the Speaker, now, that they laid off

40 nurses, and your critic got up and said how much money they've invested. The problem is that you have no plan.

One would wonder where to start here, but I'm going to complete. Health care is the number one expenditure. Number two is education. We agree with most of this. We know there's a lot of waste—Ornge helicopter, eHealth. I don't need to go on.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Too much waste.

Mr. John O'Toole: A lot of waste. The third is servicing interest on the debt. Let's put that into context. Interest is about \$10.5 billion. I just say that so easily—\$10.5 billion on interest, on the mortgage.

In today's economy in Canada and Ontario, the only reason the economy is functioning at all is because of low interest. When interest is so low and the debt is costing us almost \$11 billion, imagine if the interest goes up, and it will, because what they call quantitative easing is putting more money in. Without growth in the economy, they're putting more in, which is eventually inflation.

Here's the real issue: On this whole discussion where quantitative easing comes into this, if it goes up 1%—this is an important number. If interest goes up 1%, it will cost \$800 million in interest.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: What is that again?

Mr. John O'Toole: One per cent of interest will cost \$800 million more. You won't get anything for it. Some bondholder in Europe or somewhere else in the world will probably get that \$800 million and buy another one of our gas plants or something like that. It's a disaster.

I said this earlier and I thought after about how appropriate on Bill 105 it was: Vision without some action is a dream. It's like, "I'm going to play NHL hockey." Well, you better work hard and practice and all these things. Vision with no action is a dream.

Action with no vision is a nightmare, and that's exactly what we have in Ontario. The Green Energy Act sounds very good. Who would disagree with it? But then when you drill down on it, right now we're paying people 80 cents even when we don't need the power from wind at night and we're getting, at night, about three cents. We're paying them about 15 to 20 cents for wind.

Besides that, we're having to turn off nuclear plants. The cost of all this supporting the dispatching of the Green Energy Act, renewable materials under FIT contracts, is about a billion dollars this year. You don't get anything for it. It's paying people to not produce.

What does that mean to the economy? Here's another example of a number: One point in the GDP—I think some of the newer members might find this important, including the Minister of Finance—with each point in the GDP that goes up, you get \$700 million in revenue. So if your gross domestic product, which is the value of your goods and services, goes up, your revenue goes up automatically, like boats in a harbour, by \$700 million. If it goes down, it's even worse: You lose the \$700 million, and it costs you \$500 million because you have to retrain,

relocate, sever and get rid of all of these people who were doing certain things.

In Ontario, where are we? Well, a good barometer is this: There are about 346,000 people without jobs. That's probably 300,000 families without income.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: I wish I had a full hour here. Vic got an hour. Why can't I have an hour? Anyway, I'll just go on with that.

I thought the member from Nipissing did a marvelous job. He gave a couple of really good examples. I commend him, because he has worked hard, not just on the energy file, but he's right up to date on the finance file. He talked about visiting California and a small community: Vallejo, population 116,000. A massive city infrastructure building—he walked in the front door, and there was nobody there but the manager and one other person. There was nobody working, and their budget was considerable. Now they're bankrupt. Why are they bankrupt? Because they were spending faster than the revenue was coming in. That's called a structural deficit, and we have one in Ontario. Don Drummond said it in the book, the one I said, the bible—

Interjection: Show them the book.

Mr. John O'Toole: —this one here. This fits nicely into our plan. The 14 white papers that we have address, almost, the 360 recommendations. Pretty well every one of them is addressed by our action plan. If people want to look it up online, it's called Paths to Prosperity. I would encourage you to look at them, question them, call your member.

What our leader, Tim Hudak, said was this: He invited the Premier of Ontario to examine the papers and take some of it, do something. Doing nothing is not going to move Ontario forward and make a better future for everyone.

In fact, I think the Premier is in paralysis now, just terrified. Every time she goes, she's handing out money, and she's probably saying, "Where am I going to get it?" I'm sure she's tearful at the end of each day, saying, "How am I going to pay off this credit card?" It will all come to roost about next March, when they try to bring in a budget.

I was at an event the other night—my closing remarks here, but I still have the floor, I hope. I was at an event with some people I have a great deal of respect for. They are people who are involved in organizations, and these organizations are giving advice under the prosperity group. They are members of that group. They are professors over at the university. One of them said—and I'm not making this up. I would not reveal their name. Vic didn't reveal the name of the barber either. Well, I'm not revealing the name here. They said that the Premier cannot bring in a budget because the revenue is even worse than they had forecast in their business model in the budget. What they're going to do is, they will bring in this hypothetical discussion about raising \$50 billion for transit tax tools—who are they talking about?—and then they're going to call an election, because if they bring in a budget, people will see through the whole charade that has been going on here.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Don't believe me. There have been reports by the Auditor General of Ontario. This report here, prior to the election, said you're in trouble, and you still are. This report analyzed Dwight Duncan. You're in trouble. This report is on the Mississauga gas plant. Tomorrow we get the one on—this is Oakville. Oakville is tomorrow.

There's what you did to the horse racing industry: 60,000 people who are very hard to employ, out of work. That's action without a vision. It's tragic. I can't for one moment believe it.

Mr. Speaker, would you give me the indulgence of calling this bill tomorrow? I'll finish off the hour that's left.

With that, it has been a privilege to have a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
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sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
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Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 8 October 2013

Mardi 8 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 8 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 8 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

WEARING OF BRACELETS, PINS AND RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: A point of order, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning.

I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent this morning for today that all members be permitted to wear bracelets and lapel pins and ribbons in recognition of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons and pins. Do we have consent? Agreed?

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 3, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very pleased to have been asked, chosen actually, to speak on this bill this morning, following the remarks made last week by our critic the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, who I think dissected Bill 91 rather expertly. I want to thank him and his staff for doing such a thorough analysis of a bill that purports to do one thing and does absolutely the opposite to what it said.

In fact, I should start by qualifying that the minister, in due respect, was here listening to the remarks by our critic Michael Harris. One of the remarks in there that I've taken the liberty of looking at, the remarks made on October 2—for the viewers who would like some accu-

ate content, perhaps they should take a look at the remarks on October 2 when he concluded his one-hour statement. What was said there—and I think it's a permissible comment, with the indulgence of the Speaker—in his remarks he said, "But, Speaker, let me tell you, the minister was actually playing an even sillier game. All the bill actually does is move eco taxes from your receipt to the price tag on the store shelf."

In fact, he had claimed that he was eliminating all the eco taxes and he's not; he's hiding them. He should have been straightforward, telling—look, everyone in here is for clean air, clean water, clean soil; everyone in here. There's no question of that. If they impute motives that are other than that, it's inappropriate. Let's put it that way.

They went on to say, as well, that the—these are quotes so people can look it up and verify it. He went on in his remarks—and, again, I want to thank his staff because of the way they researched the bill, which is a very technical bill. I've had a chance to look at it, but it's actually 66 pages. There are 133 sections. There are two sections that deal entirely with setting out regulations. We're really not sure what those regulations are going to be, which causes me to worry. What are they hiding here? Either they're for it or they're against it, but you can't have it both ways. You can't say one thing in public and then find out in the minutiae the detail of these very lengthy regulatory sections, because those sections themselves will end up with more red tape, more red tape for perhaps the generators of waste. Now, I agree: Source reduction of waste is really the way we should be going.

I digress briefly, but I do want to put on the record these formal remarks. He's saying—I'll just read it here because it's so good: "I left off by saying that this bill actually continues every single eco tax program the Liberals ever created ... that fact didn't stop the environment minister from claiming that it did this summer. In fact, the day the minister announced he would be tabling Bill 91, he, of course, huffed and puffed in front of the media that he was getting rid of eco taxes. Too bad for him that the entire press gallery here at Queen's Park didn't believe" a thing he said.

"In fact, I remember a certain Canadian Press reporter tweeting that the minister's claim was the 'most misleading public statement' by an Ontario cabinet minister. The rest of the media agreed. They immediately"—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member—
Mr. John O'Toole: Pardon me.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You will withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdrawn. I'm not challenging the Chair, but I'm quoting, and it was permitted. It's in

the Hansard. So you'd have to go back and withdraw Hansard. So I shouldn't—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You caught yourself at the very end: You shouldn't and you won't. Simply withdraw and leave it at that. Stand, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdrawn. Thank you very much, Speaker. I wasn't trying in any way to start this day in sort of a combative way, but now that we're there—I'm only kidding. But there you go.

I'll only say this: I have great regard for the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Bradley. He's been here—I think he's the longest-serving member. As such, it's a tough file. In fact, the Attorney General for Ontario is here, and he had that file at one time, and he knows how tough a file it is, because there are competitive interests there, and we know on the whole that waste diversion and recycling and all that, it's important to stem it. I always say we should leave the big box at the big box store. You understand? It should be their responsibility to deal with it.

Now, that's actually one of the strategies that our leader, Tim Hudak, constantly preaches on: source reduction. In fact, even in government itself, we should stop some of the waste going on here, whether it's the announcement today by the—I may be off topic a small bit, but it's still about Bill 91, because the waste, the scandalous waste of money, is one of the things where you could stop all this. We wouldn't have to create all this infrastructure to deal with waste if we didn't create the waste of money itself.

I think this all makes sense if you think about it, because here's the deal: The Auditor General is going to announce today what it cost to cancel the Oakville plant. Now, the reason is we have no idea what it was, but I was promised by the Premier and the Minister of Energy that it was \$40 million. Now, how wrong can you be? I think it could be 10 times, 100 times wrong. I don't know. But this bill here—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very good timing. You will come back to the topic, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Speaker. The emotion level is high here today because of that scandal that's about to unfold.

But Bill 91—that is the one. It's the Minister of the Environment's, and they're setting up these unelected groups again. They're sort of like the environmental LHINS—do you understand?—to look after this thing.

Now, who's going to check the checker? That always becomes the question. Where's the money to audit this stuff? Where's the money to investigate and enforce the rules? I believe it's a fundamental responsibility of the Ministry of the Environment.

0910

In fact, in my riding of Durham, which includes Uxbridge, Scugog, which is like Port Perry, and Clarington, which is Bowmanville, Courtice, Newcastle and a lot of other communities—here's the point: One of the two big issues I have is the spreading of sewage sludge on farm fields when in fact there are processing plants within a

reasonable distance. The second one is commercial fill. All these condos they're building in Toronto—this applies, Mr. Speaker. For all these condos, if you're going up four storeys, you probably have to go down four storeys, and where is that dirt going? That dirt for the Olympics, for instance, right down here in the port lands—why was nothing ever built there for the last 100 years? Why? Because it's contaminated. Those were the old factories, the tanneries and stuff like that. Where are they moving that soil? They're moving that soil to my riding, in Uxbridge, Port Perry, and in fact they're moving some to Seagrave right now. They're claiming they're going to build an airport. It's a huge hole in the ground that they're filling up with—I believe 250,000 trucks are going to come up those roads, destroying the roads.

The enforcement of that is supposed to be by the York district office for the Ministry of the Environment. With all due respect, the staff have limited resources, I get that. Dave Fumerton is the director. We talk to him regularly to see if they can enforce making sure that the fill is indeed safe, that it isn't contaminated. They say they have this new plan now with soil. It's called soil remediation. What's that about?

I went to that plant on Toy Avenue in Pickering, run by Green For Life, and they're remediating the soil. What are they doing? Well, they're aerating it; they're turning it and putting it in windrows, supposedly. They also have these biological bugs they spray on it that eat the carbon or the petrochemical component of it. Then these microbes die. I said, "Well, when they die, they must have ingested this stuff, so it's still there. It's just inside their bodies."

There's so much double-talk on this file, I can't believe it. If it's contaminated, it goes into the water. It could eventually affect the water table, which could affect people's wells. For years we called them brownfield sites. Whenever you had old gas stations around that were closed and probably the gas containers in the ground ruptured, that petrochemical stuff went into the soil, and eventually it leaches and migrates from property to property. So nobody wanted those sites. No one ever developed them because of all the liability attached to it. That's the second problem.

The third problem that I have here is the whole idea of enforcement. The Ministry of the Environment just can't do it. Here we have another bill laden with regulations about enforcing the source reduction of waste in Bill 91. Now, again, I'm going back to the notes that were—they're not really notes. The Hansard, really, is the notes that I'm talking about. I just received another bit of information here as well, which could be quite handy. It says—this bill, we should be clear—we oppose the bill. For the record, for Hansard, our critic Michael Harris has said that we oppose the bill. But with the majority and the coalition between the NDP—they love the environment. They've got to explain to me how it's going to work. Of course, the government side, it's their bill; they'll all be whipped into voting for it. Probably, they haven't even read it. That's the most discouraging part.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We read budgets. We read bills. Yes, we do.

Mr. John O'Toole: You'll have your 20 minutes or hour, and I'm waiting for your remarks to try and defend—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Your remarks should be made through the chair.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad you're listening, because there's a lot to be said here. The Waste Reduction Act is a Liberal shell game that shifts eco taxes from the consumer's receipt to the price tag. We've said that. The bill will not only fail to meet the Ontario PC Party demand to scrap eco taxes, but it also fails to eliminate the Liberals' recycling cartel and the government's unaccountable oversight agency, Waste Diversion Ontario.

These are failed objectives, and they certainly can't be acceptable to the opposition party, my colleagues and our leader, Tim Hudak.

The Liberals plan to give the agency enforcement powers and the authority to set collection fees from businesses, which will then be passed on to consumers as part of the eco taxes paid on the product price tag. So it's hidden. The person walks in to buy a battery—\$9? Inside that \$9 package is a tax that goes to deal with the waste, probably. How are we going to enforce all this? You set these objectives, these laudable goals—through you, Madam Speaker—of reducing waste in Ontario. From every account I've heard they haven't even come close to the promise of reducing it.

This comes down to a fundamental plank in my problem, and my frustration here every day is that you can't trust them. It's like the gas plants. They said it was going to be \$40 million. Now we're going to find out it's going to be \$400 million. And Premier Wynne admitted it: It was done for political goals. She was the vice-chair of the campaign and she said that they cancelled those plants to save seats; she said it.

Then it comes back to the word "trust" on Bill 91, Madam Speaker. The trust thing, I'm saying, is where I really get frustrated. If you're dealing with someone in a debate, you can't win the debate if the other person isn't trustworthy, like telling the truth, if that's okay.

But anyway, the Liberal government turns these powers over to this agency, even though for five long years, it authorized the Liberal recycling cartel to impose exorbitant eco taxes in Ontario, including—the farmers in my riding love this one because we fought this, and I think they've reversed it—the 2,000% tire tax increase in April and a \$40 levy on a big-screen TV last May. Those are two examples where the consumers of Ontario are trying to say—it's the shell game part of it. This is waste.

For instance, we get a lot of calls—and I'm sure, Madam Speaker, you do—on the price of gas. "How come the price of gas is so high?" I said, "Well, when the Liberals harmonized the provincial sales tax with the federal GST, gas went up 11 cents overnight," because gas never had provincial tax on it.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, it did.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it didn't. No. See, there's the minister. No, it didn't. It had an ad valorem tax. It had—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Oh, that's a tax.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, the tax was at 14.3 cents per litre, but it never had provincial tax. It had GST on it, the federal portion, but I digress.

Every time they can get into your pocket—deeper and deeper and deeper. This eco tax is just another opening and the price is hidden. Those batteries are \$9?

Mr. Todd Smith: They're going to be \$15 soon.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's exactly right. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings is paying close attention, which is a good thing, because I have had the privilege to speak this morning and he'll be next.

Waste Diversion Ontario has broken the trust—there's the word, "trust"—of Ontarians time and time again and should not be rewarded by more power, bigger multi-million-dollar budgets funneled through the eco tax program. So it is disheartening—and I'm not for one moment trying to explain or apologize, Madam Speaker, to the people of Ontario, because listen, we're here representing our constituents—that's the first and most privileged role that we have: to listen to them and to respond to them—and they are concerned about the environment. I've explained in my riding the inordinate rules that aren't being enforced. Here are some more rules that are going to cost more money and I don't think are going to even solve the problem.

In fact, as you probably know, Madam Speaker, the review of the Aggregate Resources Act, ARA, has just been completed. A select committee dealt with it, and it affects a lot of things on the Oak Ridges moraine, where all the aggregate come from. My riding is rich in aggregate and I'm proud of that. I think it's an important resource in Ontario; I recognize that. But then when you look at it, the rehabilitation of these sites is important. That part of the bill, the rehabilitation of sites, is another function of both the Ministry of Natural Resources as well as the Ministry of the Environment, which ties back into: Do the jobs that they've got in legislative responsibilities now. Why are you starting to get deeper into the regulatory world of waste diversion? Again, it even says it in the notes here, it's a matter of trust.

0920

If I paid, let's say, for a big-screen TV, and I'm about to close the sale today, and somebody says, "Well, there's a recycling thing here of \$50"—wow. You might have a second thought about it. But how it's going to work today: You're going to buy the big-screen TV; it's going up in price. You won't know that there's \$50 for an eco tax for recycling.

That's the problem. It's the transparency, the lack of accountability. Those instincts within this style of the current government talking very pleasantly, proper smiles and sort of the way you communicate and that, but at the end of the day, if you can't be trusted, then the game's over.

So with Bill 91, what we're trying to say here is the bill purports to do something—and this was reported by the media—but does completely the opposite. It just puts it all inside the closet so it can never be seen again.

I go on here: “The hasty introduction of Bill 91 is the result of a number of factors, the most significant of which has been pressure from the Ontario PC Party, more specifically, Tim Hudak and Michael Harris. Our announcement last November of reforming the province’s recycling policies created a groundswell of activity amongst stakeholders from all sectors, especially with the resulting news coverage declaring that we’d be scrapping the eco tax.”

Now, they’re saying they’re scrapping it—and I’ve said this; it’s the third time. Often you have to say things 15 times for people to get it. They’re not scrapping it; they’re hiding it, period. Okay? End of sentence. You’re creating another unelected organization to be accountable to. You can’t get to them. If you have a problem with a hospital, you can’t get to them. You can’t get through the LHIN to find out why they aren’t providing certain procedures in your local hospital.

There has been increasing pressure from waste haulers and processors to create a more powerful government agency to regulate the recycling sector in favour of their industry and at the expense of business paying into various government recycling programs.

More than anything, the corrupt, tired, scandal-plagued government under criminal investigation can’t afford any more controversy, so they’re tabling a bill to trick Ontarians into believing the Liberals will be eliminating the eco tax, and it seems like a good way to challenge and change the channel.

There’s more to be said on this, and I would refer the viewer, once again, to the remarks made by our critic Michael Harris from Kitchener–Conestoga, a young, new member here. He has done a remarkably informed job on dissecting a very complex Bill 91 and coming up with the hidden pieces that the public should know about. So take the time and look up Hansard on the Ontario legislative website. Look carefully through it, and you’ll find out why that package of batteries, that can of—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments or questions?

Ms. Catherine Fife: We are coming from a completely different place with regard to Bill 91. We do, of course, support increasing targets and increasing enforceable standards.

I think we do share some concerns, though, around the Waste Reduction Authority. We really hope that you don’t give them bonuses just for doing their jobs or sticking around or showing up for work. I think that there are some good concerns that we have with regard to true accountability from that authority.

There are some good things, though, in this bill. If you read it, you’ll see that there are some good things, because we have to make up for 20 years of lost traction and lost progress. So we do need to accelerate our efforts as a province to reduce, reuse, recycle and recover, and the recovery piece is not embedded into this bill. We need to refocus our attention on avoiding sending things to landfills altogether.

Ontario’s solid waste facts: 75% goes to landfills; diversion rate, 23%; energy recovery, 2%. What a missed

opportunity in this bill to generate energy through waste. There is room for improvement, and we are going to tackle those problems when it gets to committee. It’s going to get to committee, because we’re going to support it, because something needs to be done. I know you believe in doing nothing, but we believe in doing something and making it stronger. That’s what the people of the province expect from us in a minority government setting.

Energy from waste generates clean, renewable energy, addresses climate change and creates green jobs in sustainable waste management. There’s so much potential for us on the waste diversion. We’re going to make it stronger. We’re focused on it and we actually have the expertise to make it happen. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. I’m pleased to respond to what we heard this morning from the Conservative member.

I think we’ve all agreed from the beginning that the system we have is broken. Certainly, the 23% or 25% figure that you’ve heard on diversion is so low that the system is broken. It’s a system that we inherited 10 years ago and a system that just is not doing the job.

I read the comments of the member from Davenport and the member for Kitchener–Conestoga in response to the minister’s presentation. The third party wants to work to get a system up and running that’s going to look after the waste of this province. There’s a lot involved, because it’s not only less landfills, which always cause problems in communities—they’re needed and you have to grow them because we’re not diverting our waste—but it’s a generation of 5,000 direct jobs that we can achieve through using more of our waste and mining our waste for the valuables that are in there.

You know, that’s a different concept. The third party wants to work with us and come up with a system that’s really good. I think the opposition has to look at what they’re doing. They should be jumping into this and saying, “Let’s get Ontario the proper system for handling our waste, for minimizing landfills, for creating jobs etc.”

A business group that has responded says, “A more streamlined Waste Reduction Act, focused on principles of producer responsibility and addressing the concerns highlighted in our submission, could provide a legislative framework to enable the development”—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to join the debate and bring remarks on the comments made by my friend from Durham on the Waste Reduction Act.

This clearly is a solution to a problem that doesn’t exist in the province of Ontario. That’s why we’re opposed to it. We don’t need to get in this game. The Waste Reduction Act, as my friend from Durham pointed out, is just another way for this Liberal government to create public sector jobs at the expense of private sector com-

panies. These private sector companies are the ones that are creating wealth and creating jobs in our province today. We can't afford at this time to create more public sector jobs.

We're going to create, as he mentioned, a LHIN for recyclables. We don't need that, because these recyclables have a value. They're a very valuable commodity. They are a valuable product. All we have to do as a government, as our critic Michael Harris has pointed out many times, is set the targets and the expectations of our government and then get the government out of the way. It will require audits, and there are very competent companies out there that will audit the producers to make sure they are diverting their waste away from landfills. And because these tires, as the member from Durham mentioned, have a value to them, they're sought after. I can tell you right now that 95%—there's no problem here when it comes to recycling tires in the province of Ontario; they are all making their way to the Ontario Tire Stewardship. If we actually fix this bill, which is unnecessary, and get out of the way, get government out of the way, it's going to create more companies that will want to get those tires. We're seeing it across the province right now.

So I commend the member from Durham. I commend the work of our critic Michael Harris on this file. We don't need to create another government bureaucracy, and that's what this bill aims to do: having garbage cops on the streets of Ontario. We don't need that. We can police this without creating another bureaucracy.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Davenport.

0930

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thanks very much, Speaker. I'm happy to join the debate on Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. I appreciate the comments from the members from Durham, Kitchener–Waterloo, Ottawa–Orléans and Prince Edward–Hastings.

As most members of this House know, I'm not a member of the Liberal government; I do not agree with the actions of the Liberal government. I believe that we have a much better framework to do business in the NDP. That said, however, better late than never.

So 10 years later the Liberals have shown up and they're ready to do some work, maybe, on this file, which, I have to say, contrary to what the opposition says, is important and necessary. I wish that the official opposition would put away their talking points, would put away their ideology because it just doesn't fit right here.

There is a huge problem here. We are the worst in this country when it comes to waste diversion. The "waste" in the title of this bill could apply to a waste of time for the last 10 years that the government has been here, for sure, but a waste of time particularly on this issue—a waste of opportunity.

The Conservatives, if they believed in job creation, would take a look at the facts here and take a look at the fact that seven jobs could be created for every one job in

just throwing trash away. If we actually put people to work to divert waste, to recycle and to reuse waste, we could be creating jobs here. Supposedly that's what the official opposition would like to do. Instead, they don't want to get to work here. I think that's very unfortunate.

The issue of the third party—what they're calling the "waste reduction LHINs"—I've got concerns about new bureaucracies being set up, but in in this case this is because neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives will actually protect the Ministry of the Environment; they will not stand up and say, "We actually need to protect our environment." So creating this third party might be the only way to actually make sure that we're enforcing waste diversion in this province. That's unfortunate, but I think that's a result of what you guys have been doing here for too long.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I seek unanimous consent to get another half an hour just to wrap up. Agreed?

I want to comment on the two members from the NDP. I'm quite impressed that you've talked about the effectiveness of energy from waste. I'm interested in the member from Ottawa–Orléans—I'm not sure he is—because they have plasmatification in Ottawa.

Here's the issue: I have the first and most modern energy-from-waste plant in my riding. It's under construction. If you're driving down the 401, Minister, at Kingston, you'll see the big—it's under the tightest emission regulations. I believe that the region of Durham, and Roger Anderson as well—I've talked to the ministers directly. You've got to enforce the emission targets. That's the key thing, so keep up.

But our plan, the PC plan, the Tim Hudak team plan is this: Rather than create a complicated bureaucracy with massive cost for consumers, we will just simply get it right. Under our plan, the Ministry of the Environment would set measurable, achievable recycling targets for manufacturers and importers of electronic waste. The minister then would set environmental standards to ensure the materials are actually recycled. Then we would monitor the outcomes. That's in place. That's doable today. We don't need another bureaucracy.

This is what has happened under this government: They want more taxes first, called eco fees. It's just a shameful response to an environment that we know is part of having a healthy quality of life and, in fact, a healthy economy. This plan does everything that it says, only it does it behind closed doors. In fact, it doesn't eliminate eco fees at all, which is a tax on consumers, really. It's like an HST, is what it's like.

I would also say that if you really feel strongly about this, you should contact your Liberal member and tell them to withdraw this bill, and work with Tim Hudak and the plan that we have for Ontario. It's called Pathways to Prosperity—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm pleased to rise today to talk about Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. I want to

thank the members who have spoken on this bill today for their insights and their thoughts. I'm eager to add to the discussion around this important issue.

My understanding of the bill, as it stands at second reading, is that Bill 91 is a step towards making producers responsible for the waste they produce. I hope we can all agree that, in that principle, it is a very good idea.

As we know, progress on waste reduction and recycling has all but stalled over the past 20 years. More importantly, Ontario has the worst record in Canada. I read yesterday in the Toronto Star that Toronto is now the fourth-largest city in North America, and the population has more than doubled between 2006 and 2011. With so much growth, we need to ask ourselves why we have not prioritized our waste management and infrastructure, leaving us in a position to play catch-up to the demands not just in the GTA, but for the entire province. It's time for this province to rise to the challenges of effectively handling our waste.

Before we can look to the future and to what needs to be accomplished, I believe we need to understand the history of waste management in Ontario. I see the history of waste management in Ontario as a history of community action for a cleaner environment and of companies trying to off-load responsibilities for their products' waste and the costs of dealing with waste onto the consumers and taxpayers.

Back in the 1960s there was an increase in packaging and non-refillable containers. In the 1970s and 1980s, we saw soft drink companies fighting against government regulations that would require them to use refillable containers.

Moving on to the 1980s and the 1990s, companies sought to have municipal and provincial governments pay for municipal blue box programs. These programs were struggling to cover costs of collection with lower-than-anticipated secondary material prices. In 1987 the Ontario government, with Minister Bradley as the environment minister, reached an agreement in exchange for support for the blue box program. Unfortunately, this deal also allowed for soft drink producers to walk away from the agreements made in the 1960s and 1970s that made producers 100% responsible for deposit-refund and refillable containers they were flooding into the market.

Then in 1995, the Conservative government chose to end the provincial subsidies for the blue box program, off-loading the costs to municipalities. While it doesn't come as a shock that Conservatives would off-load services, it is shocking that it took another seven years before the issue was dealt with again.

In 2002, the Waste Diversion Act imposed a 50-50 cost-sharing for blue box programs by producers and municipalities, but this new act did not fix the long-standing disagreement between both parties. Municipalities complained about the rising costs of recycling new lightweight materials, which they could not control, and companies complained about the rise in municipal collection costs, which they could not control. In other words, the problem was shuffled around with no one looking to take real leadership on this issue.

I am pleased that history will show that the NDP changed that approach. Our government played an important role in the advancement of recycling in Ontario. We implemented a comprehensive waste reduction action plan in 1991 and in 1994 enacted regulations covering municipal waste, ICI waste, composting and product packaging. By 1992, the NDP government had already met the 1989 target of diverting 25% of solid waste from disposal facilities, and we passed the regulation in 1994 which expanded the blue box programs. Municipalities across the province were set up to recycle aluminum, glass, newsprint, plastic bottles and steel containers.

Unfortunately, waste diversion rates have stagnated since that time. Almost 10 years later, in 2004, the environment minister, Leona Dombrowsky, announced the government's intention to develop a strategy for Ontario that would divert 60% of the province's waste from disposal by 2008.

Mr. Jonah Schein: But nothing happened; they didn't do anything.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A very good question. Let's ask the question: How successful was that plan? Well, today, waste diversion rates in Ontario remain stuck at around 23%. We send 77% of our waste to disposal, causing significant environmental cost, and even more disappointing has been the loss of our economic potential. Clearly, the leadership role played by the NDP government was a major factor in achieving the current standard for waste management in this province.

Now that we have looked to our past, I want to talk about our current situation today. As I said earlier, Ontario's waste diversion rates are among the worst in the country, and the amount of waste we produce continues to rise every day. We've lost track of the 3R hierarchy: reduce, reuse and recycle. In some cases, the government has spent more time focusing on burning waste rather than reducing it. It's time to return to the three Rs; they aren't just a lesson for our children in school.

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Our progress in reducing packaging has been minimal. We've moved away from refillable containers, and shamefully, we are one of the few provinces without a deposit return program for beverage containers.

Too much material is still going to landfills, wasting economic opportunities in the recycling sector and the opportunities to create jobs in our province. Recycling creates seven to 10 jobs for every one job in the disposable industry, which is truly significant to my riding in London-Fanshawe, which has unusually high unemployment rates.

Waste reduction and resource conservation is a huge economic factor, contributing over \$3.2 billion in revenue and 14,000 direct jobs in Ontario. That number could be much higher if we only had the leadership and the vision to make that happen.

Even the Environmental Commissioner stated in 2010 that "current programs under the" Waste Diversion Act "do not encourage producers to focus on waste reduction first, reuse second, and recycling third. Instead, they

generally focus on finding the least costly means of collecting and recycling materials.... there is no direct financial incentive provided to individual producers to reduce their costs through product design, such as designing a product that is easier and cheaper to recycle. The lack of direct financial incentives to improve product design can be an impediment to reducing waste, increasing reuse, and ultimately striving for zero waste.”

Under the current legislation, the government lacks the authority and the oversight to set binding targets and to fine companies who don't meet diversion targets. This is not the leadership this province needs, Speaker: legislation that protects producers while ignoring the public good—not just the public good but a public need. We need to address our waste by the most effective and affordable possible means.

The industry-funded organizations prove that fact. They serve industry's interests. They focus on keeping costs to producers down, rather than focusing on the public interest of minimizing waste and ensuring producers cover 100% of end-of-life management costs of their products.

Even now, the funding for blue box programs has fallen onto cash-strapped municipalities, meaning that programs are too limited and not convenient enough for families. Successful programs are supported programs, yet this government has continued the trend of off-loading of services and responsibilities. It has become so commonplace that there are times when I can't tell them apart from the Conservatives.

Too little has been done to address waste reduction in the institutional, commercial and industrial sectors. We see this through the off-loading of costs onto consumers who have been hit with unfair eco fees set by unaccountable industry-run stewardship organizations, organizations that directly undermine the public confidence in government recycling programs, with no fear of reprisal.

The lack of leadership on waste is shown over the years again and again. We see it with individual producers, who have been provided with no economic incentive to reduce waste or improve their products. This lack of adequate oversight has led to the export or landfilling of materials, which pollutes our environment here in Ontario and overseas. And growth in the recycling sector has been stifled by the monopoly of stewardship organizations.

We've examined our history and the current state of waste management. That's a little bit of a backgrounder. It will be interesting to see if this government is ready to take on a leadership role and bring a vision for waste management to the table, or will they simply pay lip service to the monopoly of organizations who have dominated the waste management discourse over the past few years?

We know that effective waste reduction legislation requires us to be working toward a vision of zero waste. It also insists upon a framework that recognizes the hierarchy of the three Rs—reduce, reuse and recycle—and clearly establishes standards and enforcement by government.

Further, any waste or reduction strategy should include education and public awareness, along with convenience for the consumer. If it's not easy for people to use, then they simply won't do it. That is why the education and awareness portion is vital to the success of the issue. Also, we need to ensure that companies, and not municipalities and taxpayers, pay the full cost of dealing with their waste in an environmentally sound way. Hopefully, Bill 91 is a small step towards making producers responsible for the waste they produce and taking on the challenges of waste management in this province.

I am concerned with the limitations of this bill but believe that we need to take it step by step towards prioritizing our waste management.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order: I apologize to my colleague, but I do not believe a quorum is present.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Call in the members.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

We'll return to the member from London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker. That was a welcome interruption by my colleague there, because it's apropos to the next topic that I'll be speaking on. No offence taken, and we're good.

So let's talk about the meat and potatoes of the bill. As I understand the intent of this bill, it sets out diversion targets and enforceable standards for producers to meet. It also creates a Waste Reduction Authority to enforce waste reduction activities. It phases out industry-funded organizations like Stewardship Ontario but allows producers to band together and form intermediaries; in other words, they can create third-party service providers or administrative organizations to meet new waste diversion targets.

It allows municipalities to register with the WRA, which is the Waste Reduction Authority, thus obligating producers to pay municipalities for the collection and recycling of designated materials like tires, paint, batteries, packaging etc. Fees paid for municipality collection are negotiated by the municipalities and producers, and the WRA will be entitled to arbitrate or to set compensation payments if parties can't agree.

It further prevents retailers from applying a separate eco fee to products by requiring all-in pricing for consumers, so that consumers know what they're paying; there are no hidden costs or hidden fees that they're not used to—you know, a little while ago, when you went to Canadian Tire and paid for some paint, and all of a sudden you had an eco fee on that product. So it's all in, one price, and it's all included. That's the way it should be; there shouldn't be any surprises at the end of the day.

It also expands waste diversion to the institutional, commercial and industrial sectors, ICI, for example. It makes printed paper and packaging designated materials. That's important, as well.

While much of this bill sounds promising, I feel that we really need to discuss the limitations of Bill 91 in order to improve it. The bill is a good idea, it's a good start to talks about how we can effectively have better waste reduction in our communities, in our country, but I'm really looking forward to having this bill passed so that we can do the real hard work and dissect this bill very thoroughly in committee.

Bill 91 does not mention the aim of achieving zero waste or the goal of protecting the environment and human health. The longer-term goal of the act should be to move forward as a province, where goods which are not safely recyclable are no longer sold here. That's an important thing we also need to discuss.

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Speaker, as noted before, Bill 91 also does not recognize the importance of the hierarchy of the three Rs: recycle, reduce and reuse. I remember when I was a younger person—not that I'm that old—that was really what we talked about in school. It was a mantra that we always had. We had environment days and we made robots out of tin cans. We were encouraged to think about ways to use recyclable products, to make things in our life so that we could reuse them.

I was at an event at Art in the Park where we had crafters and artists. It was very interesting. This lady had a display and she actually took plastic garbage bags and was making rugs out of them. She was so encouraged by making less waste in her community, that she actually produced something that was very usable for other people. She would sell them to people for cottages or decks. They were very handy because they were plastic and they would last forever and wouldn't wear out. So it was encouraging to see that there are people out there, and I know there's a lot of environmentalists out there, who really want to take hold—and not just recycling. It's extremely important, but sometimes the materials that we have that we can recycle and reuse, we can actually use them in our daily lives. I was very encouraged to see that she was taking that on and passing on that information.

We also need to look at how to expand the recycling process. We have the recycling in the LCBO, but why don't we look at expanding the recycling to wine bottles? I know that the BlueGreen Alliance has called for that. It would be great to create these green jobs and reduce waste and even give a market advantage for Ontario wines, so I think that would be a great way to put that to use, recycling wine bottles and creating jobs and getting us ahead—

Ms. Cindy Forster: Pop bottles.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, pop bottles, yes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Twenty-five years ago in Alberta they were recycling pop bottles.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: We're not supposed to converse directly with other members, but I'm just going to take that comment quickly on pop bottles. Twenty-five years ago, we used to recycle pop bottles. Now we've got cans and we recycle cans. But it's a good idea that we start with the wine bottles, because we already do that at

the LCBO. This is just a logical step, to expand that recycling even further and create more jobs and help the Ontario wine industry as well.

Speaker, there are some good things in this bill, and I hope that the Conservatives will recognize the benefits of having a greener environment by taking the initiative and having a more proactive waste reduction policy enacted in our province.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Don't count on it.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Now, I heard a despairing remark from my seatmate, but we always have to remember that as long as we're here in this House representing the voices of our constituents, which should be our intent and the goal of why we were sent here, then we have to try to break through the party lines or partisanship and get our point across. It's human nature that an idea that's brought forward today may not be at the right time, but if we persist, who knows in 10 years where things can go?

Thank you for allowing me the time to speak on this act. I hope we can all agree that more work needs to be done at committee but it certainly is the right way to go in our environment and waste reduction for all Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise in support of the revision of the Waste Reduction Act. I know that people speak about reduce, recycle and reuse, and I'd like to add another called rethink.

I'd like to tell you a story about a wonderful organization that has done exactly that, called Windfall. It was Michael Prue from the Beaches who introduced me to this extraordinary organization which actually diverts 20 million tonnes every year from landfill. How they do that is that in Ontario, and in Canada in all probability, organizations and retailers who have new clothing that they cannot resell end up putting it into dumps. So this organization actually takes this new clothing—not used, new clothing—and gives it to shelters and to organizations, a number of them through Ontario, where they can use this clothing for people who need new clothing. For someone who has been in a shelter, who has had to leave their home, there's nothing worse than having somebody else's used pajamas on a bed. It's much nicer to have a pair of brand new pyjamas along with that brand new teddy bear that's sitting on the bed.

This organization, Windfall, has done an extraordinary job in terms of how it reduces, reuses, recycles and rethinks the use of 20 million tonnes that normally would go into—and that's waste diversion of the right kind. That's happening in Ontario. As matter of fact, it was Madame Meilleur, the Minister of Community and Social Services at the time, who supported this organization that we continue to support.

The other one we do is the Furniture Bank, and it's exactly the same thing. People who need furniture get their furniture for nothing. The idea is you have your used furniture, it goes in, and it's fixed if it's needed or refurbished or whatever needs to be done. Then, not going into the landfill, it becomes a part of somebody's home. So good things are happening in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: I want to quickly get on the record following a debate this morning. Bill 91 is nothing more than the Liberals' desperate attempt to change the channel on their failure to increase waste diversion in Ontario. In fact, in 2008, the Liberals promised to achieve a 60% waste diversion rate. Speaker, do you know where they're at today?

Mr. John O'Toole: Where?

Mr. Michael Harris: At 23%.

Mr. John O'Toole: Oh no.

Mr. Michael Harris: That's right, 23%, and the province has had a waste diversion rate for the last 10 years.

But here's the worst part of the Liberal record: They've actually created a decline in the recycling rate for Ontario's largest source of waste, which is the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, the ICI sector. This sector represents 60% of Ontario's waste. But for 10 long years, the Liberals had ignored it, and they refused to enforce the existing recycling regulations on the ICI sector, which are known as the 3R regulations. I know the former minister will know exactly what I'm talking about.

What has the result been? Well, the AG found last year that the Liberals have actually let ICI waste diversion drop from 19% to just 12%. That is a significant decline. Obviously, we need leadership on the waste diversion file, but instead of showing true leadership, the Liberals have tabled a bill that will create more red tape and, of course, more taxes. Tragically, it will keep municipalities and stakeholders more focused on fighting over money than actually protecting our environment.

So I'm calling on the Liberals to drop Bill 91 today and adopt our plan, the PC plan, for greater waste diversion in Ontario. That starts with scrapping eco taxes, eliminating useless bureaucracy and then creating the right conditions for economic growth in the waste management sector. Our plan would empower the Ministry of the Environment to set measurable and achievable recycling targets, establish environmental standards, monitor those outcomes and enforce the rules. That's it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to take the opportunity to thank the member from Davenport for his lead-in on this important issue and the member from London—Fanshawe as well for her part in the debate today.

I sat actually for a number of years on the waste management planning strategy committee of the region of Niagara when I was a regional councillor. I can tell you that Niagara's diversion rates are far higher and have been than 23%. When we talk about 23%, we're talking about an average across this province.

In fact, I took the opportunity today to have a look at the region's website, and they've been participating in a program called the Ontario Electronic Stewardship for the collection of electronic waste for recycling. Since 2009, this effort has actually saved 200,000 tonnes of

electronic waste from going into the landfill sites. In Niagara alone, we have diverted over 402,000 kilograms of electronic waste from actually going into landfill sites. There are municipalities that are doing far better than 23%. In Niagara, we also have a program set up where, a couple of times a year, you can bring in all of your left-over paint, all different kinds of household cleaners, fluids—anything that is a contaminant that we wouldn't want to go into the landfill site. In the region of Niagara, they're also out, a couple of times a year, at the market, doing educational programs in the communities on how to continue to divert waste.

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I think that this bill is an important one. I know that we'll be proposing some amendments when it gets to committee. But for the greater good of our community and the world, I think it's somewhere we need to go.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I too would like to congratulate the member from London—Fanshawe for giving a very good historical background with respect to recycling and the dealing of waste in Ontario over the last 25 or 30 years.

We have to do better. We simply have to do better. What this bill does is it makes the producer of a product responsible for its ultimate disposition into new product or into reusing the product at the end of its life cycle. That's what this bill does.

The current bill doesn't do that. The current bill was passed by the Conservatives back in 2002, and doesn't give the government enough power to basically make sure—

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We'll talk about eco fees in a few minutes. We'll talk about eco fees.

Speaker, if you listen to the Conservatives, they basically say that it's a tax, and that's the end of it. But we have to get rid of this stuff in a proper way. The only way to do it is to make the producer ultimately responsible for the proper disposal of the items. It is as simple as that. They will then come up with better methodology in actually how to do it.

Mr. Steve Clark: Michael Harris has got the better plan.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, you know, your plan is exactly what the old bill is all about. The old bill that was passed in 2002 is exactly what you're proposing now, and we all agree that it's not working to the same extent that it should be working.

I will be speaking about that in a few moments, Speaker, because I've been waiting for this moment for an awful long time, to get my two cents in with respect to proper waste disposal and waste diversion in Ontario.

In the meantime, I'd like to congratulate the member for London—Fanshawe for an excellent presentation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to everyone who participated in this conversation, this debate today.

I think the main goal that we all want to get to is that we don't want to have pollution where we live. We don't want to have—

Mr. Jonah Schein: We don't want to ship it to China, either.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes, exactly. We don't want to have it where we live. We don't want it in our backyards—you know that old saying—and we don't want to ship it anywhere else; we don't want it overseas.

I think this bill needs to be really taken seriously. We always talk about pollution and how it's going to affect the next generation. Everybody's worried about their children and their grandchildren. Waste is a terrible thing to pass on as a legacy to the next generation. We have to get really serious about it and make sure that we have this bill so that producers are responsible for the products they bring into the stores, into retail, for us to use.

We have to also maybe even take this a step further at some point. There are many municipalities that have the green bin, where you take your organic waste, and I think that's a great initiative as well. We used to have a composter, and that's where a lot of the organic material went. But not everybody has a composter. When you actually start adding that up into the landfills, that's also something that we can do proactively to minimize waste.

I think having the bill—that sets the vision of waste reduction, but we must take it seriously and make sure producers are responsible for what they bring into our society. We also have to take the lead on making sure that we hold people accountable for that waste reduction and toxins that go into our landfills, so that we can have a safe place for our children to be raised.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I just need to interrupt before we move on in the debate.

I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Balkissoon assumes ballot item number 54 and Mr. Dickson assumes ballot item number 60.

Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Before starting the debate, I would just like to introduce two people who work in my office. One of them is Sabrina Grando, who has been with me for the last 10 years and as my chief of staff has been acting in that capacity for the last six years or so; and Liz McLennan, who's my legislative assistant.

Speaker, I had the great honour and privilege of being an environment minister here in the province of Ontario for three years back in 2007-10. There are two main issues we face as a society here in Ontario: (1) the ever-growing disparity between the haves and the have-nots in our society, but that's subject to a debate of another day; and (2) we've got to deal with global warming, with the ever-increasing amount of greenhouse gas emissions that we are producing.

We live in a great province—2,500 kilometres from Cornwall to Kenora. We aren't into the environmental movement to the same extent that Europeans are or many other people in developed countries because we've got a great land mass and relatively few people, and so other countries have been forced into doing the environmentally right thing for many, many years. The way we've always dealt with our items that we want to dispose of is we used to call it "the dump." Then we said, "Okay, that's no longer acceptable terminology. We'll call it 'the landfill.'" This province has got hundreds and probably thousands of landfill sites.

Now, of course, we've got an even better word. We give them some environmentally green name etc., but it's basically still the same thing. Once we finish with something, we put it down a hole and then somebody else can worry about it so many years down the road. As a result, many of our waterways are polluted—or close to it—and many of our greenhouse gas emissions actually come from these dumps, these landfill sites. We've got to simply do better.

The Tories, back in 2002, came up with an act, and I'm sure they wanted it to work. It didn't give any real power to the Ministry of the Environment and the government to deal with proper recycling and reducing. Yes, we are a little bit better off. We're doing 23% now or 25%, but most of the stuff still ends up in landfill sites.

So we brought in the eco fee. They call it a tax. I can tell you, Speaker, that I worked on it for a good three years when I was there to bring in a system whereby basically we made people aware of the fact they have to properly recycle, and we basically left it up to industry to implement a proper fee structure to make sure that the items were properly disposed of at the end of their lifecycle.

Most companies—and they will go nameless at this point in time—didn't like it very much. They felt it was the responsibility of the city or the township: "After it's over and done with, let them just deal with whatever are the after-effects of products that are no longer usable." They basically undermined the system in 2010. Items that should have been charged a penny were all of a sudden charged a dollar. Of course, you know what broke out. People were very upset, and rightfully so. I make no bones about the fact that that system could have worked if the vast majority of manufacturers and retailers had wanted it to work. But it didn't work, and we know that it didn't work. People were upset over the fact that on a tube of something or other that cost maybe \$9, they were charged \$1 instead of a penny. Many of these companies, by the way, knew darned well what they were doing, in my opinion.

What this bill does is, it makes the producer of a product responsible for the ultimate reuse of that product, the ultimate proper disposal of that product and mining it into new products. There are some fantastic companies in this province. We've got a tire recycling outfit just outside of Stratford that takes old tires, makes them into crumb tire and basically uses it as part of the paving material for new roads.

There are some great electronic recycling organizations in this province. GEEP comes to mind—but I know there are many others that I've had the opportunity to visit—where basically they take pieces of electronic equipment, take it apart bit by bit and reuse the materials into new product. Sometimes they melt it down and they reconfigure it etc. Think about it. When we're building something new and manufacturing something new, we have a choice: We can either mine the product in the traditional sense, or we can start to reuse the products that have already been built and reconfigure them into new product. There are some great companies that are doing that.

What this bill is really all about is saying to producers, "When you put the price of something together, there are labour costs and there are material costs, and you'd better also factor in the proper disposal costs of that item." It makes sense. Why should society be left with all of the unusable products that are out there, and why should municipalities be left with having the responsibility of putting it into landfill sites so that these young pages here, 40 or 50 years from now, can be paying for the proper cleanup of those landfill sites in the first place? There are some awful landfill sites in the province of Ontario, and sooner or later, they will have to be cleaned up, and there's going to be a huge cost to that.

Doesn't it make a lot more sense to say to a producer that, when you make something, at the end of its life cycle you have the responsibility to properly dispose of it in one way or another—by recycling, by reusing, by other things?

Mr. John Yakabuski: You're not even telling them what they have to do. You're just telling them they're going to have to pay for it.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, somebody has to pay for it. Somebody has to pay for it, and the producers of the—since they're making the goods in the first place, they are the logical person to pay for the proper disposal of that particular item as well.

To listen to the Tories, you would think—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Order.

The minister may continue.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I would just say to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke that that's not the way we behave in eastern Ontario, the way he's behaving here this morning.

Speaker, let me just say this: It is absolutely incumbent upon all of us, regardless of what side of the aisle we're on, to make sure that products, when they are no longer needed, when they are no longer useful—that we use that material in order to create new products. That is the best—

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm sorry, Speaker, but there's so much interference here right now. I'm just wondering what the member from—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Neanderthals on that side.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Objection, Speaker. Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker: I just heard the Minister of Community and Social Services, Comsoc, refer to the members on this side of the House as Neanderthals, and I would ask that he stand up and apologize and withdraw and act like a man.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Point of order, Speaker: I didn't mean to insult Neanderthals.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Sit down.

I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'll withdraw.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to come to order.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would ask the member to come to order.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the members to come to order.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being almost 10:15—

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's only 10:14, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I know, but this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me great pleasure to introduce, in the west members' gallery, the family of our exceptional page from Leeds–Grenville: Peyton Horning. I'd like to introduce to members of the Legislature her mother, Alexandra Prefasi-Horning; her father, Paul Horning; her sister Taylor Horning; and I'd like to introduce her grandparents Suzanne and Ron Prefasi. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons to signify cancer. Agreed? Agreed.

Start the clock.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to welcome the Ontario Federation of Agriculture to Queen's Park. In the gallery are a number of representatives including Keith Currie, Neil Currie, Brent Royce, Eleanor Renaud, Ralph Brodie, Debra Pretty-Straathof, Paul Wettlaufer, Joe Dickenson, Peggy Brekvelde, Larry Freeman and Rejean Pommmainville.

I had a great meeting with them this morning, and I hope all members will attend their reception this evening at 5:30 in room 228.

Mr. John Vanthof: I would also like to take this opportunity to welcome the OFA to the Legislature. I hope everyone takes a chance to listen to their message. Agriculture is very important to this province and they are great ambassadors.

Mr. Bob Delaney: In the galleries today will be some students participating in a program called Let's Talk Science. I'd like to invite members to join me, the Let's Talk Science students and Amgen Canada in committee room 230 for lunch today and to learn more about the results of this year's program.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a friend of our family, Kathie Dick, who is in the gallery. She is a retired registered nurse.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we've got some guests today I'd like to introduce from the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation: Deborah McNorgan, Anthony Miceli, Beth Hampson, Bruce Cole, Maddy Viray and Dr. Betty Power.

From Shoppers, which is supporting the pink bus: Sean Webster, Akeel Jaffer, Dalia Salib and Lisa Gibbs. And from CIBC, another sponsor: David McGown and Angela Sarino.

Welcome to them all.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am delighted to introduce and welcome a delegation from Italy: Mayor Corrado Calvo, mayor of Rosolini, a town in the province of Syracuse in Sicily. He's accompanied by his family: wife, Maria Luisa Basile, and children Antonio and Maria Chiara Calvo.

I would like also to welcome Dr. Francesca Ciccazzo, city councillor; Salvatore Cataudella, responsible for social services and education; and from the Eloro Cultural Association, Mr. Joe Ricupero; Rita and Salvatore Bazzano; Connie Ricupero, vice-president; and president, Enzo Di Mauro.

Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to recognize, in the members' west gallery, James Roy, from the riding of Cambridge, who is leaving my office and going to join the office of the member for Northumberland—Quinte West.

Hon. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce, in the east gallery, Bob Potts, the principal negotiator, Algonquins of Ontario; Clifford Bastien Jr., chief, Mattawa/North Bay Algonquin First Nation; Alan Pratt, legal counsel, Algonquins of Ontario; Chief Patrick Glassford, Algonquins of Greater Golden Lake; and Jim Meness, councillor, Algonquins of Pikwākanagān.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome Eduardo Harari, who is the vice-president of community for the York Centre Federal Liberal Riding Association. Welcome, Eduardo.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just wanted to add my welcome to that of the member for Oxford to the members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture who are here for Agriculture Week.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, later today we will learn a little bit more about what you and Dalton McGuinty have been working so hard to hide these last three years. We know that you and Dalton McGuinty made a snap decision to cancel gas plants with no thought whatsoever on their cost, the analysis on the damage it does to our reputation, our hydro system or the lost jobs.

You sometimes seem to pretend that you once met Dalton McGuinty at a cocktail party, or that you once maybe crossed his path at a Liberal convention, but nobody believes that. We know that you were the co-chair of the campaign. We know that you were at the Premier's right hand when this decision was made. You signed off on the document at cabinet authorizing the cancellation of this gas plant.

So, Premier, can you tell us once and for all: If you signed the document, if you made the decision and you made the call, how can you claim you knew nothing about this project to begin with?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that, to the contrary of what the Leader of the Opposition has said, I have done everything in my power to make sure that every question that has been asked has received an answer. That's why 160,000 pages of documentation have been provided to the committee. That's why we moved to broaden the scope of the committee. That's why 62 witnesses have been able to go to the committee and answer questions.

I said from the moment that I came into this job that I wanted to make sure that there was an open process and that, where there were questions, those questions would be answered. I'm not going to pre-empt the release of the report by the Auditor General. She will release her report this afternoon, and we will have the discussion that will ensue from that, but our objective has been to open up the information and provide that information to everyone who has been asking questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Leaders take responsibility, Premier, and leaders take action. Nobody has been fired. Nobody has been released from their job. You actually promoted the people behind this into higher positions in your cabinet. You've actually given the green light for

more, and the problem is that this scandal approach that puts the interests of the Liberal Party ahead of the interests of hard-working Ontario taxpayers every time continues. We've seen it with eHealth. We've seen it with Ornge. We've seen it with the Wynne-McGuinity cover-up on the gas plant scandal—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Tim Hudak: And now, with the Pan Am Games scandal, the \$500,000 grant that went to one of the largest entertainment companies in Canada for the NBA all-star—this abject waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars to advance the Liberal interests. Premier, enough is enough. When is this going to come to an end?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My responsibility and my job is to advance the interests of the people of Ontario, whether that means providing information when questions are asked by the opposition—we have done that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's all about me asking for quiet.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, it is. The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex will come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And I have been very clear that I take responsibility for mistakes that were made. I have apologized, and I apologize for mistakes that were made in terms of the siting of those gas plants, but the reality is that every party in this Legislature—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex will come to order—second time.

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Every party in this Legislature agreed that those gas plants should be relocated. I would also say that every party in this Legislature agreed that getting the Pan Am Games would be a good thing for Ontario. John Tory and Howard Hampton wrote letters of support. They thought it was a good thing to have the Pan Am Games. Apparently, the current leaders don't agree, but I think that having the Pan Am Games in Ontario and the legacy that will ensue is a good thing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, it's pretty basic. If my daughter, who turned six last week, apologizes, but then does the same thing over and over again, she's learned no lesson. The problem is, your apology is empty when we see the same scandals erupting with the Pan Am Games and the grant of a half million for the NBA all-star game.

These attempts to put the Liberal Party ahead of ordinary, hard-working taxpayers have real-world conse-

quences. Today at City Hall in Toronto they're debating whether they can actually fund the new subway to Scarborough because this billion dollars that you blew on the gas plants could have completed that project. It could have created jobs in the province of Ontario. It could have relieved gridlock. But instead, you decided to blow a billion dollars on saving two Liberal seats.

Premier, you've learned no lesson. The cover-up continues. When is this all going to come—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, happy birthday to Miller. I hope she had a lovely day. I would say that it is absolutely critical that the government learn from mistakes that are made. That is what I have said all along. That's why we have a new process in place for siting energy infrastructure. It's very important that we learn.

I would suggest that talking about the creation of 26,000 jobs by bringing the Pan Am Games to Ontario is something that we all agreed in this House was a good thing. The legacy of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Renfrew will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order, in case you didn't hear me the first time. He knows why I'm not happy with what he said.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The legacy of sports venues that we will have in this province that will allow athletes for generations to come to be able to train—those are very, very good things. I am proud of the reality that we won the games and that the games are going to be here, and they're going to be a great success.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. You admitted that cancelling the Oakville gas plant was a political decision. You told this assembly that the final price tag would be \$40 million. Her hand-picked OPA said that that number was spectacularly wrong and it was actually \$310 million. She was forced yesterday to acknowledge that the costs were "unacceptably" high, and then today we learned in the Globe and Mail that there would be no cost at all had it not been a political decision. So we are left to draw two conclusions. Premier, when you signed the cabinet document cancelling the Oakville power plant, is it fair to say that you were either so far in over your head that you didn't understand what those costs actually were? Or did you mislead this House all along that it was more than \$40 million?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, I'm standing. Your mike's not on, so when I finish, then you can stand. The member will withdraw, but before she stands I'm going to tell everybody that I sense there's a trend coming, and if it's going to happen, I'm going to pass questions.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I withdraw it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now it's time for an answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just be clear once again on how we got here. Our government listened to the advice of experts and sited two power plants over the objections of local residents, which was something that shouldn't have happened. Over time it became evident that the concerns of the residents were, in fact, legitimate and we needed to make a change. The government listened to those concerns and cancelled the power plants for relocation elsewhere. Everyone agreed. The PCs agreed; the NDP agreed. The estimates of the cost varied, but all of them—and I've said this—were unacceptably high and that money should not have been spent in that way.

Everything that we did, though, in the run-up to and in the process of cancelling—the advice that we got was that if we had waited longer, it could have been much more expensive. That is the reality of what was happening at that time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier. A government without credibility certainly has no legitimacy, and this government has lost all credibility on the Oakville gas plant cancellation and on their entire long-term energy plan.

It is clear that the Premier has told us false numbers in this House all along. The Premier has admitted that the cancellation was a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

While I have both groups deciding how I'm going to judge and rule on language in this place, I'll make the judgments on that.

I'm going to caution the member that I do not like the idea that you're trying to find ways to say something that you're not supposed to say directly—trying to find an indirect way to say it. I caution the member, last warning.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The Premier has told this House numbers on various occasions that have been debunked outside this House.

Speaker, the reality is they made a political decision. The Globe and Mail has acknowledged that today.

She insults every single Ontarian when she says, "I really feel that my responsibility ... is to make sure that this doesn't happen again." Talk about a deathbed conversion. She was the one who cancelled the plant. She signed the document, and she was the one who sat at the cabinet table.

So, Premier, will you finally admit in this House today that you knew all along that that \$40 million was wrong and you made a crass political decision to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that governments learn from mistakes that are made. For example, when a subway tunnel is built and is filled in, it's very important that governments learn that that's not a good idea and that in fact sets back transit building. When an asset like a public highway, like the 407, is sold—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just as I was attempting to bring attention to the opposition for its loud, boisterous voices, I will do so with the government benches, in the name of the minister of rural Ontario and the Attorney General—along with those on the other side who are doing the same.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When, for example, an asset like the 407 is sold, it's very important that governments and future governments learn from those kinds of decisions and mistakes.

When these gas plants were relocated, I said over and over again and I continue to say that there were mistakes made; there were things that happened that should not have happened. I take responsibility for those, and my responsibility is to make sure that they do not happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If I had a cent for every single time a Liberal on that side of the House stood up and said, "It's not going to happen again," after Ornge, after eHealth, after OLG, after Pan Am, after, after, after every scandal, I could afford a power plant in Oakville.

For months my party has been calling for a judicial inquiry into this, but we now know that you will go to any lengths to suppress and obscure the truth and ensure that we don't receive all of the true numbers. You have obstructed—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. That does go over the line so I'll ask the member to withdraw. If you do not redirect in any other way, then I'm passing.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure, Speaker. My question—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw.

Premier, given that the two gas plant cancellations have now become the largest political scandal in Ontario's history, where hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayer money was abused in order to save Liberal seats, will you finally admit today that you have orchestrated a scheme that outperforms the federal sponsorship scandal and that you have ensured that the people of this province are going to be paying well into the future—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wrote to the Auditor General. I asked the Auditor General of the day to look at the Oakville situation. I met with the Auditor General yesterday, Mr. Speaker. I have done everything in my power to make sure that the information that was asked for has been made available to those who have asked. I have opened up the process because I believe that it is our responsibility to learn from decisions that were made and make sure that those decisions, were they wrong-headed, are not repeated in the future. I believe that is our responsibility.

1050

But the bottom line on energy in this province is, when we came into office, there was not a reliable transmission grid. There was not reliable generation. We have cleaned that up; we are closing the coal-fired plants. People in this province can depend on energy. They can depend on transmission. It's clean, it's renewable, and we have turned the corner on the fiasco that was left by the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

New question.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. In 2010, the Liberal government in which the Premier proudly served cancelled a private power contract in Oakville, a contract that they had just signed months before. On October 18, 2010, the Minister of Energy said that “the costs, if there are any at all,” will “not even be close to the fearmongering numbers...”

Does the Premier still stand by her government's comments in 2010?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: One of the issues about this whole discussion has been the degree to which the numbers have varied. There has been uncertainty in the advice that has been given to us repeatedly. Every time that I have spoken in the House, I have spoken with the numbers that I have been given, whether it's in 2010, 2011 or today. The reality is that the numbers have varied. That is the case; that is the reality that we're dealing with.

Unfortunately, it has been a challenge to get a handle on exactly what the numbers are, so that is why I asked the Auditor General to look at the situation. I asked her to give us an overview of the situation as she saw it, and that is what we will hear today when she releases her report at 3 o'clock.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, with all due respect, it hasn't been the numbers that have been varying; it has been the information the Liberals have been able to give to the public that has been varying every single time. For two years the government refused to disclose information pertaining to the cost of cancelling the private power deal, blocking freedom-of-information requests and

dodging questions in this House. They signed the contract; they cancelled it. But they refused to share the facts with the people of Ontario who would be paying the bills.

At one point, the Minister of Energy told me, “We'll be happy to share ... the results of” the discussions with TransCanada when “they're done ... we're confident they'll result in a good solution for everyone.”

Does the Premier think that her government delivered a good solution for everyone?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I've been very clear that I haven't thought this process has been a good one at all. I said that from the outset, there should have been a better process in the siting of the gas plants.

Since I have been in this office, I have opened up the process. We've broadened the scope of the committee. We've provided 160,000 documents, and provided an opportunity for all the questions that the opposition members had to be answered.

The important piece right now is that we listen to what the Auditor General says and that we make sure that the policies that we've put in place going forward address the concerns, address the issues and address the mistakes that were made. That is our responsibility; that is what we'll do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: After the election, when the government finally, grudgingly admitted that the public would be on the hook for the Liberal Party's crass decision, the member from Don Valley West, the current Premier, said: “The total cost of the relocation is \$40 million.”

Does the Premier stand by her own assertion that the total cost of this crass political move would be \$40 million?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, those are the sunk costs and those are the costs that are not retrievable and are not paying for any future benefit, and I think the leader of the third party knows that. I do stand by that number, but I have just said that the numbers have varied, that there have been other costs that have been included, and that is what the Auditor General will clarify today.

The fact is that we have opened up the process. In terms of the information that's available, we have worked very hard to make sure that everything that has been asked for has been provided. That's why 160,000 documents have been provided and that's why 62 witnesses in 93 hours of testimony have gone before the committee to answer all of those questions: because we opened up the process.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. People know what's going to happen today. The Premier will say sorry again and declare it's time to turn the page. But the only reason that we are on this page is

because at every single step of this saga, the government put the Liberal Party's interests first and the people stuck paying the bills were an afterthought.

Does the Premier really think that the government deserves credit when they fought against transparency and accountability relentlessly for years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have fought for transparency. Since I have been in this office, and throughout the run-up to the leadership, I said that it was absolutely imperative that we open up the process and that we provide information, and that's what we have done.

But just to the leader of the third party's point: In terms of how we got here, I think it is important to remember that there were experts who advised that the location of the gas plant should be where it was originally. The community objected to that, and I think it was at that juncture where the community was objecting, where there were voices being raised, and we did not pay close enough attention. We did not have a process in place that would have taken into account the concerns of the community. That's where the original mistake was made, Mr. Speaker. That's what we've corrected. That's what can't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier can try to replay it however she wants. The reality is, they signed the contract, and just a couple of months later, they cancelled it. Her story does not hold water, Speaker.

At every step of this scandal, the Liberal government has put its own political skin first. Transparency, honesty and the people of Ontario were distant afterthoughts for the Liberal government.

The Premier now wants credit for calling the Auditor General, but the reason we need the Auditor General in the first place is that at every single step along the way, this Liberal government has put spin, cynical politics and self-interest ahead of Ontarians.

Does the Premier realize that we are here today because her government has never once been upfront with the people of Ontario about how much it wasted on the Oakville gas plant?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I guess my question back to the leader of the third party is whether she understands that we've contracted to build 21 gas plants; 19 are up and running. These two did not—the process did not work as it should have.

But our interest is in the interest of having a stable electricity system in this province for the people of Ontario. My question to the leader of the third party would be, does she understand that? Does she understand the mess that the electricity system was in when we came into office in 2003, and did she have a plan to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

I'm looking for individuals. The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke will come to order—last

time. And the Minister of Rural Affairs is going to come to order. That's his second time.

If anyone chooses to try to out-shout me, you'll lose, and any other comments that are made when I'm trying to get control of this place.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, does the Premier know that every single person in Ontario knows that the difference with these two plants is that they threatened five Liberal seats if they were allowed to go forward?

People in this province are coping with very tough times, and a lot of them are wondering about whether they can hold a job, whether they can pay the bills, whether they can find the health care that they need for their loved ones. They see a government that has not only put the needs of their party ahead of the needs of the public, but that has acted as though people have no right to this information, even though they're the ones who are stuck paying the bill.

So does the Premier understand that when she says sorry yet again today, it sounds like just another piece of empty Liberal spin?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just do not accept the premise of the leader of the third party's question, because the fact is, I have opened up the process. I have not been trying to hide information; I've been trying to provide information.

1100

I know that people are struggling. I know that it is very important that we focus on the economy and work with the private sector to create jobs, Mr. Speaker. I understand that. But I also know that if we don't have a reliable electricity system in the province—and I'm not talking just about the blackout; I'm talking about the state of our transmission, the state of distribution, the state of our renewables. We've worked on all of that since we came into office. We had a plan. We've executed it. There were two gas plants that the process did not work for. We're changing that. We'll make sure that that doesn't happen again. But we have turned the corner on the electricity system in this—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. My question is for the Premier. Later today, we'll learn from the Auditor General just how desperate you were to save the Liberal seat in Oakville. We'll learn three years after the cancellation of the gas plant just how much cash you were willing to squeeze from Ontarians to put the Liberal interests ahead of theirs. But you already knew what you were getting us into when you signed the cabinet document that started this whole payment process back in July 2011. So you either knew the magnitude of this cancellation and what it would mean to families or you blindly signed a document, not caring how much you spent to save that Liberal seat. So which was it, Premier: "I don't know" or "I don't care"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have appeared before the committee. I've been quite clear about what I knew and what I didn't know. What I will say again is that we were advised that waiting to relocate the plant until after construction had begun could have been much more expensive, so we were doing everything that we could to mitigate those costs.

The reality is that I appeared before committee. I was very clear about my role, which was not central in terms of decision-making. What we have done since I've been in this office is to have opened up the process to provide all of that information, and people have come before the committee and have answered the questions from the member opposite repeatedly.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, the most astonishing fact is that while many of us spent the last 12 months trying to get to the truth, we still don't know how much it cost to cancel the Oakville plant. The Premier talks about transparency, but 150,000 documents later, they were still able to keep the truth from us.

You knew last fall, when you tried to pass off \$40 million as the amount, that it was much, much more than that. Your energy minister has said \$40 million. Other members of your caucus and your cabinet have said \$40 million, but we know that number is not true.

So, Premier, who are you going to hold accountable over this? Who is going to lose their job? Is it going to be the energy minister, the finance minister, or should it be you, Premier?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You may be surprised at my next comment.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The very reason that I wrote to the Auditor General and asked the Auditor General of the day to look at the Oakville situation, Mr. Speaker, was because there was confusion. There were questions about the numbers. The \$40 million in sunk costs was not the whole cost. It was very clear that there were a lot of questions about what the total cost was. That's why I asked the Auditor General to look at the situation. That's why we're getting a report today. That's why the Auditor General will be releasing her report and there will be more light shone on what the costs were.

Had I not wanted that information out, I wouldn't have asked the Auditor General to look at the situation. I did that and opened up the process. That's why we'll get the report today, Mr. Speaker.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Published reports suggest that this afternoon's Auditor General's report will show that TransCanada would not have been entitled to damages if the government had not pulled the plug as part of its seat-saver program. These reports say that because of opposition from both the

township of Oakville and residents, TransCanada would likely never have gotten a shovel in the ground and the contract would have terminated on its own.

Why did this government waste hundreds of millions of dollars cancelling the Oakville plant when it had no legal obligation to do so?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think the first point is that we should wait for the Auditor General's report to come out this afternoon.

The second point is there has been testimony in front of committee about the situation in Oakville and the efforts that were being made both by the municipality and by the power plant.

More importantly, perhaps the honourable member in his supplementary wants to explain his opposition to this very plant. Maybe he wants to explain why he told InsideHalton on October 7, 2010, "I don't agree with the Oakville power plant. I don't think it is necessary."

Perhaps he wants to talk about why the member from Beaches-East York, his colleague, said, "I'm glad that the people of Oakville came to their senses. I'm glad the people of Oakville hired Erin Brockovich and did all the things that they did in order to have this killed."

Mr. Speaker, it's a bit rich for that member, who led the opposition of his party against this plant, to stand up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, you can tell you've got a good question when there's a major dodge going on.

If the Oakville contract had simply run its course, it likely would have been terminated due to events beyond the control of TransCanada. The company would have been entitled to no damages under that scenario. But that scenario would have taken several years to unfold. It would have threatened the Liberal seat-saver program.

How does the government justify a crass political decision to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to save Liberal seats?

Hon. John Milloy: This is so rich, coming from that member. When there was an issue in his own riding with Portlands Energy, a very similar one, this is what—let me quote from the Beach-Riverdale Mirror:

"Tabuns vowed he won't be bound by the Liberal government's plans for his riding, which include constructing the natural-gas-fired \$700-million, 550-megawatt Portlands Energy Centre at the unused R.L. Hearn station in partnership with TransCanada Energy...." Listen to this quote, everyone. Listen to this quote from the member: "This is going to be a political decision, but it needs someone who's going to be a champion for Toronto-Danforth," he said."

Mr. Speaker, it's a little rich that that member could stand here today and ask that question.

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Finance. I know that for many years, our government

has taken a leadership role among the provinces in promoting the establishment of a common securities regulator for all of Canada. Businesses in Ontario and in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham have long been concerned that our current system is a patchwork of securities regulators that place unnecessary costs on business and add to the burden of red tape facing their competitiveness.

My constituents and businesses in my community are pleased to hear that you have made recent announcements on steps to correct the current system. Can you please provide the House with an update on the establishment of a common securities regulator for all of Canada?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for the question. She's absolutely correct: Our government has long advocated for and taken leadership in the creation of a co-operative securities regulator right here in Canada.

A few weeks ago, I was pleased to be joined by my counterparts from the federal government and British Columbia to make that historic announcement. Together, we'll establish a co-operative regulator.

In our last budget, we laid out the framework for such a regulator, and this agreement is based just on that. It will add real benefits to Canadians and to our businesses; it will increase the ability of those businesses to raise capital; and it will allow households to save and invest with more confidence. Of course, in all, it will help create jobs and grow our economy.

Mr. Speaker, this is important: Toronto and Ontario are home to Canada's largest securities market and regulator. As has long been said, that co-operative securities regulator should be based in Toronto, and that's exactly where it will be.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the Minister of Finance for providing that update. I agree that this new regulator is long overdue and will help to ensure that Ontario and Canada maintain our competitive advantage and prosper in a globalized world.

I know this issue is of special importance to the minister, as he provided a statement to this assembly in March 2010 advocating for a co-operative regulator. Given the minister's recent announcement with British Columbia to establish a co-operative securities regulator, it is essential Ontario continues to lead the Federation in building consensus on this important issue.

1110

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please speak to some of the specifics of this new regulator and how Ontario will engage more provinces in this process?

Hon. Charles Sousa: While the head office will be based in Toronto, it will build on and respect the unique strengths across the country by creating regional offices as well.

Essential to the new co-operative regulator will be this pooling of provincial, territorial and federal expertise. It will allow Canada as a whole to better compete in the global economy. It will reduce costs, increase efficiencies

to capital markets regulation, strengthen the competitiveness of the economy and attract more investment, all the while enhancing the reputation of our country's financial services sector, much of which is based here in Ontario.

This was a provincial solution, Mr. Speaker. It's a bottom-up approach, and it's working. This is an historic moment, making all of Canada, as well as Ontario, a more attractive location for investment.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier. Premier, today the Auditor General will hand down yet another report. This will be the sixth special report from the AG in four years. These six reports on scandals are in direct response to your government's actions.

With the eHealth report, Premier McGuinty said, "We welcome the auditor's report, we accept his findings and we commit to adopting every single one of his recommendations."

With the consultants in health care report, Minister Matthews said, "Thank you to the Auditor General."

With the Ornge report, Minister Duncan said, "I look forward to the recommendations of the Auditor General..."

With the Mississauga gas plant cancellation report, Premier, you said, "We welcome his report..."

Since it's clear you don't have a jobs creation plan, is this your big plan, to keep the auditor employed, after thanking her, of course?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was waiting for a little bit of meat in that question. The reality is that, as the reports come forward and as the recommendations come out—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First of all, the member asked the question. I'm sure she wants to hear. And the other members are shouting somebody down, and I don't think that's going to get anywhere.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Of course, Mr. Speaker, when the reports are tabled, we appreciate them and we receive them, but the next step is to implement them, and that's what we do. We're implementing the recommendations.

When I talk about the way government has to learn from challenges and mistakes that are made, that is about implementing recommendations of the experts who look and say, "This is what happened and this is what should happen next."

We've implemented the recommendations on Ornge. We're implementing the recommendations on eHealth, and I look forward to the recommendations of the Auditor General today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mrs. Julia Munro: The Auditor General's responsibility is to assess the value for money of a government project or program. She asks, "Did the taxpayers get their money's worth?" From the past six reports, the answer is

a resounding no. Your government has heard so much advice from the Auditor General that people are left wondering if you rely on the Auditor General's reports as part of your strategic planning.

My residents are understandably aghast at the gas plants scandal, and they want your government held accountable for all its actions. How do you explain your record of scathing Auditor General reports to taxpayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Here's how government works: Any government of any stripe has a plan. We have had a plan; we have implemented our plan. At regular intervals and sometimes in special reports, the Auditor General and other external officers will look at what government has done and will make recommendations that will improve the process. I think that it is a sign of a strong and intelligent and learning government that when those reports come forward, when recommendations are made by people who have expert advice, that we can implement changes, and government then can evolve to be more accountable and to do the business of government and the business of the people of the province better.

I think that's what government exists to do. It exists to improve the lot of people in the province, to provide services in a way that is rational and that is cost-effective. There can be recommendations from sources, including the Auditor General, that can improve those processes.

We look forward to the recommendations of the Auditor General this afternoon.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Two weeks ago, I met with workers from Clairmont Electric, in Hamilton, to discuss safety concerns they had about the construction at the Pan Am stadium. They informed me that they were asked to sign a document permitting non-electrical workers to install electrical equipment, all in the interest of cutting costs. The College of Trades, which this government established, was put into place to prevent these types of practices.

Does the minister believe that the use of labourers with no specialized training in electrical work is the safest way to install electrical equipment at the Pan Am venues?

Hon. Michael Chan: This is more of a labour issue, and I'm going to direct the supplementary to the Minister of Labour.

Talking about the capital project on Pan Am Games, we are doing a fantastic job up to this point of time. I'll tell you why: All the capital projects are on time and on budget. The early numbers coming back here are under budget—under budget, Speaker; at this point in time, \$50 million under budget. This is very good news for the Pan Am Games.

We are right now on stage two, which is the operation of the Pan and Parapan American Games. This week, the international people are in town. PASO are in town to celebrate the Pan and Parapan Am Games.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Well, the safety of the spectators and the athletes who will be using the Pan Am venues should be the minister's primary concern. Unfortunately, the minister has decided to give Pan Am executives lavish bonuses but cut costs by hiring non-electrical workers to do electrical work. Those bonuses will be rolling in, I think.

Will the minister get his priorities straight and put public safety above the perks of Pan Am executives?

Hon. Michael Chan: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: To the member opposite's question, the health and safety of workers and the public is obviously the paramount priority for the government.

The certification of trades falls under the responsibility of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. However, during the transition period, enforcement of said certification currently falls under the Ministry of Labour.

Ministry of Labour inspectors carry out this enforcement during field visits. An inspector visiting any construction project would routinely audit compulsory trades, including electricians, and take enforcement action where a non-licensed person was performing the work of an electrician.

In this particular case, the Ministry of Labour has visited the site seven different times on different matters to make sure that all rules are complied with. It is our understanding that the College of Trades is aware of Clairmont Electric's concern, but no formal complaint has been filed at this time. Therefore, no investigation can be done of the issues that have been raised by the member.

PROTECTION OF RESOURCES

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, Atikokan is a community in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan about two hours west of the city of Thunder Bay. In the day, Atikokan peaked at a population of 7,000, 8,000 or 9,000 people, and that population growth was fueled by the creation of two large mines, Steep Rock Iron Mines and Caland Ore.

Necessary for the creation of those mines was the creation of a series of earthen dams in and around the area to prevent natural drainage from flowing into those mines. Once the dams were created, the lake was pumped out, and the mines were created. Now, one of these earthen dams is called the Hardy Dam. This dam has been the subject of concern since first being identified by the MNR some years ago with the potential for some failure.

My question to the minister is simply this: Can the minister describe for the community of Atikokan and for this House what we've done up until this point to ensure the structural integrity of that particular dam?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is raising a very important public safety concern in his riding. The Hardy Dam is one of 391 dams that our ministry is responsible for across the province.

This year, MNR will allocate \$6.25 million to repair and maintain these dams. The dams provide a number of benefits, including controlling flooding and drought, producing hydroelectric power, providing recreational opportunities and preventing the spread of invasive species.

1120

We take the safety of all dams, including the Hardy Dam, very seriously. We've undertaken emergency repairs in response to the sinkholes and seepage issues that have developed at the Hardy Dam site. Since 2004, we have spent over \$1 million on engineering evaluations, repairs and installing equipment to help monitor the dam.

MNR has retained a senior geotechnical engineer to monitor the dam. We've also installed equipment to measure hydraulic pressure inside the dam.

The senior geotechnical engineer will review the data, and we will ensure that there's ongoing—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the minister for that response. As he's aware, there is significant political concern from Mayor Brown in Atikokan—from the entire council in Atikokan—about the results if that dam were to fail.

Highway 622 is a main artery in Atikokan. That would be compromised. There's a rail spur line that feeds the Ontario generating plant that's now being converted to biomass. That would be compromised. The ski hill would be compromised.

But perhaps most importantly, should the dam fail, the infill rates from that failed dam into the old mine site that currently contains significantly contaminated water would raise the rates of infill to the point where that mine site could potentially overflow its banks, and that contaminated water could then potentially find its way into the Seine River system. This would be a consequence of international proportions.

Minister, thank you for what we've done so far. Speaker, my question is: Can the minister describe for the political leadership in Atikokan and northern Ontario what our plans are on a go-forward basis?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan is aware that we are taking immediate steps to ensure public safety with respect to this dam. We're in the process of securing a contract with an engineering firm to repair the dam and reduce water pressure, and funding has been allocated for the project to begin immediately.

MNR expects the repair work to extend the dam's operating life by about 10 years, allowing time for a long-term decision on the future of the dam.

Monitoring of the dam has been increased to twice daily, with regular reports from those on site. We've also established an emergency preparedness plan, which is designed to ensure MNR and its partners are prepared to implement measures should the failure occur.

This plan ensures stakeholders are notified and that we'll work together with the emergency response officials to implement measures to ensure public safety.

We'll continue to work with the community of Atikokan and stakeholders to ensure the long-term stability of the dam.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question today is for the Premier. Premier, it's easy to be generous when you're spending other people's money, and you're definitely setting an example.

Recently, you defended the \$7-million bonus package for TO2015 executives saying it wasn't "out of whack"—public servants receiving 200% of their bloated salary for showing up for work. Then, you let 76% of them take advantage of taxpayer money and more by misfiling their expenses.

Tomorrow, you're throwing a lavish Pan Am party for \$500,000. Out of respect for the Ontario taxpayer, Premier, the Ontario PC Party unanimously agreed not to attend.

Premier, are you going to continue to let the entitlement thrive, or shut these ridiculous completion bonuses down and stop the frivolous spending?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said in response to an earlier question, we bid on the Pan Am Games. The Leader of the Opposition and the leader of the third party agreed that it was a good thing to do, that we should go for it and we should try to get the Pan Am Games here in Ontario.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, your leader agreed.

So as the host of the 2015 games—just to the issue of the reception—it's a requirement to hold a general assembly reception, to host that meeting here in the venue where the Pan Am Games are going to be held. The host for the next Pan Am Games will be chosen as a part of that meeting. So it's all part of the package.

We believe that the 26,000 jobs that are going to be created as a result of having the Pan Am bid, the legacy venues for athletes for generations to come—we believe those are good things. It's unfortunate, I think, that the opposition doesn't agree.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Premier, no one disagrees that the Pan Am Games are going to be a good thing for Ontario. We've never said anything different than that. The question is, at what cost? And what is the cost?

I want to be clear that the Pan/Parapan American Games are about our province and about our athletes, yet the average income for a high-performance athlete at the Pan Am level is \$29,000—\$10,000 less than the average Canadian personal income. More tellingly, it is \$450,000 less than that of the Pan Am CEO, who's definitely taking home the gold there. And that doesn't include the 200% bonus just for showing up for work, or the unlimited expense account, or the world-class partying, or the countless other perks that we're still learning about.

Premier, is prolific spending a new Pan Am sport?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that in order to be able to get these games, we had to compete with cities around the Americas. In order to get the Pan/Parapan Am Games, we had to put in place a competitive bid. Part of that competitive bid was having in place a secretariat, having in place a compensation package that would bring people in who would run the games, the calibre of which would have competed with the other cities. That's the reality.

I'm not defending particular compensation packages. What I'm defending is the notion that we would have the Pan/Parapan Am Games, that it's a good thing for the province, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is the member from Renfrew tired yet?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'm wondering if the member from Prince Edward-Hastings is.

You have 10 seconds.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: These compensation packages are based on the officials from Vancouver 2010 and the London 2012 Olympic Games, successful events. This is the largest multi-sport—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. That's 10 seconds. New question.

GO TRANSIT

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, I met with mayors from the Niagara region. The lack of convenient and affordable regional transit was raised by them: the fact that there are summer-only, weekend-only GO trains to and from St. Catharines and Niagara Falls, but not a single weekday train for Niagara commuters who need to get to work in Hamilton, Burlington or Toronto.

How is it that this government has hundreds of millions of dollars to move gas plants and protect its own interests, but no money to put in place year-round daily GO train service between Toronto and the Niagara region?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I really enjoy the third party, because they're never crass or political. Unlike all the other parties in the House, they are above politics. We listened to questions about Windsor and London for some reason last session, and now they've discovered Niagara region. Someone bought them a new map. I'm so glad these are not politically motivated questions, because you people never do that; you're not politicians.

Mr. Speaker, we have expanded track. We are building a new station in Hamilton. We now have the GO bike service. We're working with Mayor Diodati to put in unprecedented levels of transit investment. We're well aware of that agenda.

We're still making up for cuts from the two parties opposite when they were in government, but I'm glad the member opposite has a map of Ontario now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you for that very insulting answer.

The people of Niagara region and the commuters would take GO Transit and avoid congested highways if there was reasonable GO service. Instead, the Liberal government expects Niagara Falls and St. Catharines residents to wait up to 90 minutes for a weekday morning GO bus. That's not feasible for busy families with many demands.

Instead of spending hundreds of millions of dollars on its own interests, why won't the government invest in the needs of Niagara residents and commit now to a delivery date for all-day GO train service to Niagara? The mayors want to know—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'd like to ask the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek not to heckle when your member is asking a question.

Answer, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of my partner's favourite activities is getting on the bike trains that go to Niagara and doing the Welland loop. It's an amazing experience and we're very proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, we have \$507 million going right now as part of a \$602-million investment in highway infrastructure in Niagara region. We have put \$54.4 million into transit in the Niagara region; in highway infrastructure right now, as I said, \$602 million; and we've invested \$34.4 million in roads and municipal infrastructure related to transportation.

1130

We're making major investments right now in buying track from CN and expanding track capacity, and we're working with the municipalities to improve highway local transit at an unprecedented level. We're proud of that record.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Our economic plan is investing in people; it's investing in infrastructure; it's creating the right business climate for job creation right here in Ontario.

During my time as a municipal mayor, and now, as I serve the constituents of Glengary-Prescott-Russell as their MPP, jobs and the economy continue to be a priority in the discussions I have with them on a regular basis.

I know that our government has made some tremendous strides in rural Ontario through our regional economic development funds. I would ask the minister if he could provide this House with an update on how the funds are being allocated and how they are creating jobs across this province.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thanks to the member for this important question. This week marks the one-year anniversary of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, a fund that has already helped to create and retain more than 6,300 jobs across southwestern Ontario—over \$25 million of government investment, and it has leveraged nearly a quarter of a billion dollars in private sector investment—jobs in great places like Middlesex county, Breslau, Elmira, Tillsonburg, Cambridge, Wallaceburg, Guelph, Palmerston, Woodstock and Brantford.

In eastern Ontario, 12 company expansions in Storm-Dundas-South Glengarry, 11 in Northumberland-Quinte West, six projects in Leeds-Grenville and 11 in Prince Edward-Hastings—these four sets of investments in eastern Ontario alone have driven more than \$40 million of economic growth in eastern Ontario.

Both funds have secured over 19,000 jobs since their inception, with many more to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for the update, and thanks for all the good work you do on behalf of Ontarians. It's great to hear that the work of our government is facilitating to help create jobs and to stimulate the economy.

Coming from a rural riding, I know that what may work in Toronto might not work in rural Ontario. But as we're all under one umbrella, we're all one Ontario, and when it comes to job creation in this province, we all stand to benefit from the economic growth throughout the province.

Our government is creating the right economic climate for businesses while supporting them across this province. I ask the minister to provide this House as to what specific action we are taking to help businesses stay and grow right here in Ontario.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm happy to speak about what else we're doing for businesses across the province. On top of the \$88 million that we've committed so far through our regional funds, we're also supporting businesses in a number of important ways.

In the last five years, we've eliminated 80,000 regulatory requirements for business; that's a 17% reduction. We've extended the accelerated capital cost allowance for the purchase of machinery. We've recently announced a three-year, \$25-million social enterprise initiative to help build that sector in Ontario. We'll very shortly be rolling out three additional funds, valued at \$100 million, targeting our youth. And of course we introduced legislation, our Supporting Small Businesses Act, which will increase the exemption threshold for employers who have to pay the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

MINISTRY GRANTS

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last Monday, on September 30, your government quietly gave a very generous grant in the amount of

\$500,000 to Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, a multi-billion-dollar company, to help host the 2016 NBA all-star game. The grant was part of the Celebrate Ontario initiative that is supposed to help draw tourists for events that may not have the ability to do so without government assistance.

To think that MLSE could not host this event without a grant is ludicrous and an insult to the taxpayers who can't afford to go see the game. How many Raptors tickets will this \$500,000 grant buy for you and your Liberal colleagues?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's an air ball. You just threw up an air ball there, Charles.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I'll provide the technical fouls to go along with it.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to give the supplementary to the Minister of Tourism, who is doing an outstanding job of attracting an NBA all-star game that has never occurred—in its 65-year history, it's always been in the United States. It's coming to Canada.

The individuals across the aisle don't seem to appreciate that it's not the amount of money that's being invested, but the amount of money that's going to be earned: \$95 million coming to the province of Ontario. That never would have been possible if the Minister of Tourism didn't take the leadership to attract it here in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: We all know the NBA game was going to come here whether your government gave money or not. It's ludicrous to say that.

There is still no justification as to why the Liberals feel the need to keep handing out taxpayers' money. I'm sure my fellow members of Parliament did not forget the scandal of 2007, when the Ontario Cricket Association received \$1 million from the Liberal government when it had only asked for \$150,000.

For a decade, this Liberal government has wasted hundreds of millions and billions of taxpayers' dollars on debacles such as gas plants, Ornge, the Green Energy Act and eHealth. This is the same old pattern as under Dalton McGuinty. When will the abuse of taxpayers' money stop?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question. I am quite surprised that the member opposite was silent when we supported the 2012 NHL all-star game in Ottawa. She was silent when we supported the Grey Cup game last year in Toronto.

It's a good thing to do. Look at these economic benefits: There will be 100,000 people watching the game come 2016. It would attract 75,000 tourists and 30,000 overnight visitors coming to town. The NBA all-star

game will broadcast to 214 countries. The total audience is 200 million. It will also attract 1,800 media members coming to town.

One more time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Parkdale Community Information Centre in my riding was one of many centres across the province notified of funding cuts to pay equity funds. Worse, these funding cuts were applied retroactively to last April 2013. For the Parkdale centre, that is thousands and thousands of dollars in cuts, midway into the budget year, that they had absolutely no chance to plan for.

Why is this government creating turmoil in these centres and taking away funds they had already promised, while spending millions in perks for Pan Am execs?

Hon. Michael Chan: I think the member opposite was talking about a singular matter that I'm not familiar with. I will get back to her to get more information on the matter she is talking about.

In terms of the Pan Am Games, we've talked—

Hon. Ted McMeekin: She should share them.

Hon. Michael Chan: No, this is a fantastic time to celebrate the Pan Am Games because the international guests are in town this week for the AGM, and also to pick and choose the next Pan Am and Parapan Am Games in, I think, 2019.

Again, right now, the Pan Am Games capital projects are all on time, on budget or under budget by \$50 million.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today I have guests from the riding of Brant: David Hill, Mike Ellis, Aaron Hill, Mary McGee, Julie Sguigna and Scott Smith. I'd like to welcome them here to Queen's Park. Thank you for being here.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome, in the west members' gallery, Judia Mark and Justin Lai, who are the brother and mother of Megan Lai, one of our pages here in the Legislature today.

DEFERRED VOTES

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1140 to 1145.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Members take their seats, please.

On September 10, Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of Bill 60. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Munro, Julia
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Hardeman, Ernie	Murray, Glen R.
Arnott, Ted	Harris, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Bailey, Robert	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Balkissoon, Bas	Holyday, Douglas C.	Nicholls, Rick
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	O'Toole, John
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Pettapiece, Randy
Campbell, Sarah	Jackson, Rod	Piruzza, Teresa
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Qadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Coteau, Michael	Leone, Rob	Shurman, Peter
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Marchese, Rosario	Takhar, Harinder S.
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Mauro, Bill	Thompson, Lisa M.
Duguid, Brad	McDonell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wong, Soo
Fife, Catherine	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	Yakabuski, John
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff
Fraser, John	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Gerretsen, John	Millroy, John	
Gélinas, France	Moridi, Reza	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 97; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is referred to the Standing Committee on General Government.

There are no further votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1149 to 1500.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a special report from the Auditor General entitled Oakville Power Plant Cancellation Costs.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GEISSBERGER FARMHOUSE CIDER

Mr. John O'Toole: I have several statements here; I only have time for one, though. Innovation in farms and agriculture are an important part of Durham region's agricultural heritage. I'd like to celebrate that in the few days before Thanksgiving weekend, when we all have to thank a farmer. I'm pleased to report that my constituents Gord and Garry Geissberger were honoured with a Leaders in Innovation award at the Premier's Summit on Agri-Food Innovation.

Geissberger's Farmhouse Cider uses an award-winning "bag-in-box" technology that keeps cider fresh and tasty without preservatives or refrigeration. The provincial award, presented on October 7, recognizes the Geissberger family's development of a mobile apple cider mill that is the first of its kind for Ontario. This mobile cider mill brings the bag-in-box cider packaging technology to smaller orchards and households.

This family business is located near Mitchell's Corner in my riding of Durham, in the community of Clarington. It was founded by dairy farmer Hans Geissberger, the grandfather of the current owners. Hans Geissberger emigrated from Switzerland in 1925.

I would like to commend Geissberger's Farmhouse Cider for its leadership, innovation, initiative, courage and perseverance. Congratulations on this provincial award from myself, the constituents in the riding of Durham and, indeed, all people in the province of Ontario.

AGRICULTURE INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Autumn is a season when farming is top of mind in my riding, as it is across the province of Ontario. It is my honour to rise today and pay tribute to the hard-working farm families in my riding of Essex on this, the 15th anniversary of Agriculture Week in Ontario.

As you know, Essex county is blessed with the longest growing season in Canada. To extend that growing season further, Essex county also has the highest concentration of greenhouse vegetable growers anywhere in our country, and greenhouse producers are keeping much of the value-added work in-house by processing, packaging and shipping fresh Essex county produce throughout Canada and the world.

The agriculture sector in Essex county is a huge driver of our economy. We have over 1,200 businesses regis-

tered in this sector, and that number continues to grow. The sector has been identified by Workforce Windsor-Essex as a promising sector for employment. Increasingly, my constituents are turning to locally grown and produced food and drink options. Thanks to initiatives like Grown Right Here and the growing prevalence of farmers' markets, the ability to make that choice to buy local is much easier and more accessible. Also, there's some great work being done by my friend Adriano Ciotoli at WindsorEats in promoting culinary tourism in Windsor and Essex county.

As often is the case, where there is opportunity, there are also challenges. In order to support continued growth in the agricultural sector, we must invest in the energy distribution network to get much-needed hydro to greenhouse growers. We must also invest in the education of our future workers in the sector in order to meet the increasing challenges of technology. Mr. Speaker, I'm certain that you could concur.

If you ate today, thank a farmer. If you are a farmer, thank you.

HOSPICE VAUGHAN

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today I rise to recognize Hospice Vaughan, a dedicated organization working in my community.

One of the most difficult things we face as human beings is our own mortality. Death doesn't discriminate. It is always untimely and rarely are we ever prepared for it. It's even harder for us to comprehend the loss of a loved one, and in these dark moments we look for the support and guidance we need to move forward.

Hospice Vaughan provides those in the last stages of their lives with the emotional and spiritual support and care they need. They guide family and friends through the healing process and give those facing heartbreaking loss the strength to find hope and meaning in life once again.

On October 18, Hospice Vaughan will be hosting its annual Giving Thanks Gala. This event is organized by a dedicated group, and I'd like to take a moment to thank Alessandra Piccolo, John Amendola, Carmela Sisto, Lucy Cardile and the rest of the Hospice Vaughan board, all of who continue to do amazing work in my community.

I also want to thank two individuals who are particularly important to me, Anna Venturo and Almerinda Casciato, who do a fantastic job in my constituency office and who also serve on the Hospice Vaughan board.

Speaker, organizations like Hospice Vaughan help keep our communities connected during hardship. All Vaughan residents are comforted in knowing that we are able to find support and assistance when experiencing difficult times.

QUINTE AGRICULTURAL
HALL OF FAME

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise today to recognize Ontario Agriculture Week and also the six newest inductees from

Prince Edward–Hastings into the Quinte Agricultural Hall of Fame at Farmtown Park in Stirling.

Bill and Marilyn Brant have been fixtures in the Tyendinaga Mohawk community for decades. Since 1984, Bill has been the chair of the Indian Agricultural Program of Ontario, a program for status native farmers in Ontario. Bill served on the Mohawk band council for more than 10 years, including four as chief. The Brants are the first First Nations inductees into the hall of fame.

The late Bill Greer was an institution in Wellington. As a farmer, Bill's family was known for producing some of the best tomatoes and berries in Prince Edward county. Greer Canning was a big employer as well, and quite a job, as the employees actually had to peel those tomatoes by hand. Bill's passion for pumpkins helped lead to the founding of Prince Edward county's Pumpkinfest in 1997. As a matter of fact, he was the first Ontarian to grow a 1,000-pound pumpkin. It was purchased by a company in California and shipped out there at \$10 a pound.

Tweed township might not exist today had it not been for Don Martin. He was a director for Bay of Quinte Agricultural Mutual Fire Insurance for 30 years. He served nine years on Hungerford township council, and then on the amalgamation committee with the village of Tweed and Elzevir township. He was also awarded a Centennial Certificate of Merit from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture in 1988.

The last inductees were my dear friends Russell and Mary Sills. Sadly, we lost Russell last year. If anyone could be said to be a fixture in the Stirling community, it was Russell and his work in the farming area. I know that Russell would never forgive me if I left this out, but he bled Tory blue every day, Mr. Speaker.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Michael Prue: I do not usually comment in this particular minute and a half on events of the House, but I feel today I must. I was appalled by the response given by the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation to what I thought was a very civilized and sane question this morning.

For the record, I met with mayors in the Niagara region yesterday in St. Catharines and Niagara-on-the-Lake. That is part of my job as the MPP for Beaches–East York and as the critic for finance. It's also, I think, part of my job because I am a former mayor myself, and I understand the needs of communities across this province.

I went there looking for economic initiatives that they are undertaking and the help that this province might be able to give them, and the response I received today I can only describe as mealy-mouthed and unbecoming of the status of the minister who gave it.

It is not just me who takes umbrage at this. The minister received an email immediately after he said what he said in the House. I can only read part of it: "I was just watching question period when Mr. Prue asked an im-

portant question regarding transportation in the Niagara region."

It goes on to say, "As someone who resides in St. Catharines and has lived in the Niagara region my entire life, I found the 'humour' in your response to Mr. Prue's question to be offensive. Could you not simply have stood up and given your response in a respectful manner, something I believe the citizens of the Niagara region would have appreciated and deserved."

I think the minister owes this House an apology.

NAVRATRI

Ms. Helena Jacek: Today, I would like to recognize the auspicious period of Navratri that is currently being observed by our Hindu brothers and sisters across the province.

In Sanskrit, the word "Navratri" means "nine nights." During this period, Hindus worship God in the form of the deity Durga and other female deities, such as Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity, and Saraswati, the goddess of education and knowledge.

Navratri, which is celebrated twice a year during the spring and autumn, symbolizes the triumph of the forces of good over evil. Throughout this time, feasting and fasting take priority for millions of Hindus. Celebrations and worship take place during the evening, when devotees gather at temples and homes to sing, pray and perform a traditional Indian dance known as Garba, a folk dance that originated from the Gujarat region of India. The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport and I have been given lessons in this traditional dance at Sanatan Mandir in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, and we've had a great time participating.

1510

As Hindus across York region visit local temples like Sanatan Mandir in Markham or Vishnu Mandir in Richmond Hill, I would like to extend my best wishes to them during this auspicious period. Let's all cherish and celebrate our religious diversity in one Ontario.

CONNECTING LINK PROGRAM

Mr. Ted Arnott: The cancellation of the Ministry of Transportation's Connecting Link Program is a disgraceful abrogation of responsibility on the part of the Liberal government. Earlier this year, in spite of a commitment to all municipalities, the spirit of which was intended to assure them that no significant decisions affecting the budgets of those municipalities would be taken by the provincial government without consultation, the provincial government arbitrarily and suddenly cancelled the Connecting Link Program, which I believe has existed since 1927, when George Howard Ferguson was Premier of Ontario. Since before the Depression, since before the Second World War, since before any member of the current Legislature was even born, the Connecting Link Program has been a joint partnership between local and provincial government.

Recognizing that provincial traffic on provincial highways travels through built-up areas in smaller communities, the Connecting Link Program has paid for up to 90% of the costs of necessary road and bridge repairs through these connecting links.

I first raised this issue in the House on May 28 and have heard from the township of Centre Wellington and the town of Halton Hills. Both of them are rightly pushing back on this massive download of costs.

As a former Minister of Transportation, the Premier should know how important this program has been through the years and that it's still relevant today.

I call upon the government to either reconstitute the Connecting Link Program as it has existed for generations or help to fund each and every one of the Connecting Link municipal infrastructure projects that we need in Wellington–Halton Hills.

DAVID LEWIS PUBLIC SCHOOL

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the 25th anniversary of David Lewis Public School in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt.

In May 1990, under the David Peterson Liberal government, David Lewis Public School first opened its doors in my very diverse community. Now, 25 years later, the school has 386 students ranging from junior kindergarten to Grade 8, and a Junior Y daycare that cares for 65 preschool and school-age children.

The teachers, staff, and Principal Karen Peach are a dedicated group of highly skilled educators who work hard to prepare the students to be exceptional members of our community.

As a former school board trustee and as a community member, I'm very aware that David Lewis has become renowned for education excellence. In fact, in 2010, the students and staff were recognized by the Ministry of Education and named as a "School on the Move." More recently, the school was recognized by being awarded the Bette Stephenson and Hilary Weston award of excellence. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate Principal Peach and her entire team of teachers and staff on receiving these well-deserved awards.

Mr. Speaker, at David Lewis school, they live by the motto "Participate with Pride," and I know that I join everyone in this House in congratulating all the students, alumni, staff and teachers on this 25th anniversary. They deserve to feel great pride in their school achievements.

HIGHWAY OF HEROES MEMORIAL PLAQUES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to inform the House of an event that took place in my riding this past weekend. John Dolstra, a resident of Whitby, spearheaded a project over the last two years to raise money for memorial plaques to be placed on the Brock Street bridge over the Highway of Heroes. Working with the True Patriot Love Foundation and the province of

Ontario, John saw this dream become a reality this weekend with a packed house at Sir William Stephenson Public School.

Many Whitby residents honoured our fallen soldiers along the Highway of Heroes as they were being repatriated, and the community subsequently came together to raise over \$54,000 in order to create a lasting memorial. These plaques are being placed on the bridge to commemorate the sacrifices made by Canadian soldiers and their families. The money raised through sponsorships will go to supporting military families through programs that help send children to summer camp, provide psychological counselling, retrofit homes and cars for soldiers returning with injuries, as well as rehabilitate wounded soldiers through sport.

I want to congratulate and thank John Dolstra and his committee for this tremendous community effort and for all the work that they do in helping our Canadian soldiers and their families.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION AMENDMENT ACT (SPRING BEAR HUNT), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PROTECTION DU POISSON ET DE LA FAUNE (CHASSE À L'OURS PRINTANIÈRE)

Mr. Mauro moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 114, An Act to amend the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act, 1997 to provide for a spring bear hunt /
Projet de loi 114, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la protection du poisson et de la faune afin de prévoir une chasse à l'ours printanière.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, when the hunt was cancelled in 1999 by the previous government, it was felt, certainly across northern Ontario, that that decision was based on anything but reliable scientific data. My bill, if passed, would address issues relating to livestock and crop damage, declining moose populations and beehive damage, but, most importantly, an increasing number of bear-human interactions. This is first and foremost, for me, a public safety issue.

We do know, with quite good approximation, that 1,400 fewer bears per year are being harvested today in Ontario since the hunt was cancelled in 1999. This bill has great support across the north, including municipal

councils, individuals and organizations, and I look forward to trying to move this bill through the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 61 and Ms. Forster assumes ballot item number 51.

At this point I'd like to remind all members that, when introducing bills, the idea is to read from the short version a description, usually taken from the—what is it?

Mr. Todd Smith: Explanatory notes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The explanatory notes. I had too big a lunch today. I would ask and recommend to all members that we stick to that precept, please. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BREAST CANCER

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to start by welcoming Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare from the Canadian Cancer Society. They are in the gallery here, joining us today.

October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, a time when we take the opportunity to reflect on the impact that breast cancer has had on the lives of Ontario women, and also how to celebrate how far we have come in combatting the disease. Breast cancer is the most frequently diagnosed form of cancer and, sadly, it is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths among Ontario women.

But there is a common goal we can all work towards, and that is early detection. With regular screening, cancer can be found early and successfully treated, and when cancer is caught early, there are many more treatment options available to women. The effectiveness of screening should make us feel empowered, because cancer screening does give us more control over our own health, and it also gives us a sense of responsibility over our own health.

As with any other disease or condition, early detection and treatment are always preferable. In Ontario, we are fortunate to have the tools, the technology and the expertise to detect breast cancer. Our cancer system is world-class. In fact, according to the International Cancer Benchmarking Partnership, Ontario ranks among the best in the world when it comes to cancer survival rates. I think that's an amazing accomplishment, one of which I am truly proud.

I was very happy when St. Joseph's Health Care in London opened its breast centre last year. It's not the

only one in the province, but this is a centre that coordinates a woman's care from the moment an abnormality is detected through treatment and follow-up. A team of experts, led by specialized nurse navigators, coordinates the care for the patient from the time when she first comes in for an assessment through her entire care journey. The team includes surgeons, radiologists, nurses, social workers, technologists and others, who are all committed to patient care and support while reducing wait times for procedures from imaging to surgery.

1520

The creation of this breast cancer centre has boosted the range of cancer care that's available closer to home for many patients in the London area. It has the ability to prioritize those referred for assessment so they can have imaging and breast biopsy both performed on the same day.

One can only imagine how beneficial it is for women and their families to find out sooner rather than later if they have cancer, or to learn that they are healthy. Early diagnosis leads to early treatment, which is better for patients and better for the health care system. Screening plays an incredibly important role in early detection and treatment.

For the last 23 years, the Ontario Breast Screening Program has been available to all women aged 50 to 74. The program provides regular mammograms to women every two years. OBSP provides women with reminders when they're due for their next mammogram and helps to coordinate the next steps if there is an abnormal test result.

There are 167 OBSP sites across the province, some in hospitals and independent health facilities, as well as two mobile screening coaches that provide breast screening services to the Hamilton and Niagara areas and to remote communities in northwestern Ontario. From the time the OBSP was launched in 1990 in London, the OBSP has provided more than five million mammograms to over 1.4 million women. Speaker, 26,000 breast cancers, the majority in the early stages, have been detected through the OBSP. In July 2011, our government expanded the OBSP to include a program for women at high risk of cancer, due to genetic factors or family or medical history.

While there's no sure-fire way to prevent breast cancer—or at least not one that we've found yet—we can provide women with the tools for regular screening and early detection. It's why we're continuing to invest in the Ontario Breast Screening Program.

To make the system work even better, we're integrating breast, cervical and colorectal cancer screening services into one single, coordinated provincial program. We're encouraging Ontarians to get screened so they can stay healthy. Creating a coordinated program for those screening tests will help to increase the number of Ontarians who get screened, and help detect cancer sooner and save lives.

We know that some people don't know when to start screening for cancer. That's why our government is com-

mitted to providing Ontarians with the knowledge, tools and supports to help them learn when they should get screened. We have created the Time to Screen tool, available at Ontario.ca/screenforlife, to give Ontarians more information on when they should start screening, based on their age and their gender.

We also want to educate Ontarians about their personal risk for cancer. That's why, in our Action Plan for Health Care, we committed to develop a new, online, personalized cancer risk profile. This tool is currently in development. It will use our medical and family history to gauge our level of risk and then link those at higher risk to prevention supports, screening or genetic testing.

According to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation, only 5% to 10% of breast cancers are linked to genetics and family history. That means that 90% of breast cancers are related to other factors, including environment and lifestyle. Approximately one third of all breast cancers are preventable, which means that the decisions women make can have a significant impact on their personal risk for cancer. A healthy diet and increased activity levels can go a long way to reduce the risk of breast cancer. Breast feeding can also reduce a mother's risk of developing breast cancer in her future. And it should go without saying, but quitting smoking reduces a person's risks for all cancers, including breast cancer.

We're not the only ones committed to educating women on the importance of regular screening. Thank you to everyone across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors who are helping make a difference for so many women across the province.

This afternoon, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation visited Queen's Park with their Pink Bus Tour, aimed at providing women in their own communities with information on breast health, early screening and prevention.

Last week, Rethink Breast Cancer joined us at Queen's Park to highlight their initiatives encouraging women under 40 to perform self-examinations regularly.

The Premier and I were pleased to join cancer survivors Janice Hodgson and Ruth Ackerman with the Canadian Cancer Society in a conversation for their Women to Women campaign. Using their "Thingamaboob" device, ambassadors are encouraging women to talk to each other about the importance of regular mammograms for detecting breast cancer early.

These are just a few of the many ways partners outside of government are helping in the fight against breast cancer.

I'd also like to thank everyone at Cancer Care Ontario for their continued partnership and leadership role in our cancer care system.

Finally, as we mark Breast Cancer Awareness Month, let us give our heartfelt thanks to Ontario's dedicated doctors, nurses, technologists and all our other providers who work hard every day to provide support for those battling breast cancer as we all work to help the people of Ontario stay healthy.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I rise today to recognize October as Child Abuse Prevention Month here in Ontario. I also want to draw attention to the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies' annual purple ribbon campaign. I thank the members of this House who are joining me today by either wearing either the purple ribbon, the purple bracelet or the lapel pin we received today.

This campaign brings increased awareness and encourages all Ontarians to take part in the prevention of child abuse. These purple ribbons remind us that we all have a responsibility to protect our children and youth. In particular, everyone in Ontario has a duty, both a moral and legal duty, to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect. I know all of us are committed to eliminating abuse and violence in the lives of children, youth and their families.

Mr. Speaker, sadly, we know that child abuse does occur and takes on many forms. Nearly one in every two Ontarians knows someone who has been exposed to or has been the victim of child abuse and neglect.

Child abuse can occur in all segments of society. It knows no barriers or boundaries. It can be physical, emotional or sexual. Neglect is also a form of abuse.

As we all know, children are the most vulnerable members of any society and depend on us for protection. That's why we need to be there for them and give them the strongest supports that we can. That's why I call on all Ontarians—neighbours, teachers, colleagues, coaches and friends—to be vigilant and to report any concerns you may have to your local children's aid society or the police. All of us have a role to play.

I would like to acknowledge Ontario children's aid societies, who work every day to care for and support our children. Importantly, I want to thank the front-line staff who work with these young people. Seeing these real life cases of abuse would be difficult for anyone. Their work is so important in helping to prevent child abuse. Thank you for making a real difference in the lives of those at risk.

I know that, as a government, we have worked to strengthen the child welfare system in order to prevent cases of child abuse. We've made progress in helping to better protect our vulnerable children and youth. In 2007, our government strengthened the child protection standards and the Ontario Child Protection Tools Manual. CASs now have enhanced tools to assess risk to a child's safety and match the response to the needs of the child and family. These tools help put the interests of children first.

Rigorous background checks are also now required for those proposing to care for a child receiving CAS services, including family members. These requirements include criminal and child welfare checks of all adults in the home.

My ministry and our partners are also committed to providing the appropriate supports for children and youth at risk of abuse. By working directly with children, we

can help identify signs of abuse early and prevent further tragedy.

But we also need to help and support these young people who have experienced trauma and abuse. This is so very important.

Last week, I spoke at Boost Child Abuse Prevention and Intervention agency here in Toronto. This year, we announced that the ministry would support Boost's new child and youth advocacy centre. This program will bring local and government agencies together to provide a child-friendly and accessible place for children to receive supports. Programs, like the one at Boost, will help with the prevention of child abuse and also give the appropriate support to those who have experienced it.

1530

Our government is committed to seeing an end to incidents of abuse, violence and neglect that can crush a child's spirit and devastate the course of his or her life. Preventing child abuse is a collective responsibility. I urge all members of this House—and all Ontarians—to learn the signs of child abuse and neglect and to report known or suspected child abuse cases.

SMALL BUSINESS

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I rise today to recognize Small Business Month in Ontario. I ask all sides of this House join me in celebrating the contributions that entrepreneurs and small business owner-operators make to our economy and to our quality of life.

Small businesses, quite simply, are the backbone of our economy. Small and medium-sized businesses, so businesses with fewer than 100 employees, represent over 99% of all businesses in this province. They're important partners in building vibrant and strong communities in Ontario. They create jobs. They innovate. They grow our economy. They invest in our people, our cities, our small towns and our rural communities.

Mr. Speaker, our government's investments and programs are fostering small business and helping to grow local economies. For example, we created the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs, a one-stop shop for anyone involved in planning, launching or building a company. The ONE network gives entrepreneurs access to business advisers, strategists and market analysts in 86 offices across Ontario. It includes the following services: business advisory services for small and medium-sized enterprises that produce tradable goods or services; regional innovation centres that work with tech-based entrepreneurs to develop the skill sets they need to start and grow innovation-based firms; and small business enterprise centres, which are partnerships between the province of Ontario and local municipalities, focusing on Main Street businesses supporting the local economy.

We realize that Ontario's companies must also be global companies. After all, small businesses make our province more competitive, by creating more jobs right here at home and expanding their markets through trade.

We know that small and medium-sized businesses that export demonstrate higher revenues, faster revenue growth and greater productivity than non-exporting ones. That's why, a couple of weeks ago, we launched our Going Global Trade Strategy. It focuses on four critically important goals: (1) promoting Ontario companies' quality goods and services to the world, (2) helping companies explore export opportunities and connect with international buyers and investors, (3) streamlining export programs and resources to support our businesses, and (4) pursuing new trade agreements for our exporters.

Our trade strategy will help connect small businesses with larger more established companies that already have a footprint in worldwide markets and can provide these smaller businesses with mentoring. We are examining ways of enhancing our global growth fund, a partnership we have with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce that helps companies cover some of the costs associated with going global and getting into these new markets.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario is one of the most competitive tax jurisdictions in all of North America, because we know that providing tax relief to small business will permit them to grow by using their savings to reinvest in their company or hire more staff. So by reforming our outdated tax code and introducing the harmonized sales tax, our government eliminated 5,000 pages of out-of-date tax rules, saving our small businesses \$500 million each year.

And a short time ago, my colleague the Minister of Finance introduced the Supporting Small Businesses Act. If passed, this legislation will ensure that 60,000 small businesses will pay less employer health tax, and 12,000 businesses will pay no employer health tax at all.

This past year, we've worked with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and other business associations to reduce the regulatory and administrative burdens on small business. We've already reduced, in the last five years, burdens by over 17% by removing more than 80,000 regulatory requirements. But our actions do not end here.

We also have sector- and region-specific programs to support small business right across the province, such as the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund. Both of these funds support regional economic development by creating jobs, attracting private sector investment and promoting innovation and collaboration. We also have the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corp., which supports small businesses in the north of the province; and the Rural Economic Development program, which helps our rural communities, organizations and businesses also create jobs and attract investment; and, of course, we have programs for our farmers and our food processors.

By investing in infrastructure, we're building new schools, roads, hospitals, highways, bridges and transit in every part of this province. It will strengthen our communities and provide the right climate to attract investment, create jobs and grow the economy.

Later this month, we will join the federal government in celebrating Small Business Week in Canada, which

runs from October 20 to October 26. We'll also be celebrating with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as they host Small Business Day on Friday, October 25. Next month, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce will recognize the accomplishments of leading companies across Ontario, including small businesses, with the Ontario Business Achievement Awards.

Recognizing the important role that small businesses play in the strength of our economy is an important part of our government's plan for jobs and growth. We're investing in people, building strong infrastructure and supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate that will help companies across the province succeed while also drawing investment and opportunities to Ontario. We're working to ensure that businesses, especially small businesses, will come to Ontario, stay in Ontario, invest in Ontario and grow in Ontario.

So, this October, let's recognize, celebrate and support Ontario's small businesses and Ontario's entrepreneurs, whose energy, drive and innovation are making Ontario a global economic leader. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Statements by ministries?

It's now time for responses.

BREAST CANCER

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to mark October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month. Breast cancer affects roughly 23,800 people in Canada, and 65 women in Canada today will learn that they have breast cancer. Awareness groups make this fight a little easier. The Canadian Cancer Society, which is represented here in the gallery today, works towards informing Canadians of the signs of breast cancer and the necessary first steps.

Another important group, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation and their annual CIBC Run for the Cure, raises funds across the country for breast cancer research, awareness and counselling. Their pink bus, of course, is visiting Queen's Park today, and some of their representatives are also here in the gallery. Thank you for joining us.

Recently, I met with another group called Rethink Breast Cancer. This is an organization aimed at bringing awareness of breast cancer and support services to a younger generation of women. This group uses new and innovative tactics in spreading awareness of and working with those who are going through breast cancer at a younger age and dealing with different challenges. Cancer Care Ontario also performs an invaluable service in coordinating cancer care across the province.

I'm pleased to add my voice to this very serious issue to make sure that all Ontarians are aware of the necessary steps and tools that are available to deal with breast cancer, to combat it and to boost awareness of the organizations at their service.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to recognize and thank all of the organizations across

Ontario that do this invaluable work, along with the front-line service providers who do the work in our local communities each and every day. Thank you.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to recognize and offer support on behalf of the PC caucus for Child Abuse Prevention Month. During the month of October, we recognize that we all suffer when our children suffer and that each one of us has a responsibility to prevent and respond to child abuse.

Ontario's children's aid societies have been raising awareness during October for child abuse prevention for over 20 years, yet child abuse remains a major concern in Ontario. Some 165,673 referrals about possible abuse and neglect of children and youth were received by children's aid last year.

1540

Children in our communities are still suffering abuse or neglect at the hands of adults they know and trust, or are witnessing domestic violence in their home. So this is also a time when we're reminded that child safety and family well-being begin in the community, and every Ontarian has a moral role to play in the well-being of children and to help educate and strengthen families in our communities.

By being alert to the signs of abuse and knowing who to call to help a child at risk of harm, everyone can help prevent child maltreatment in Ontario. I challenge everyone: If you think a child needs help, please step up and take action. Call the children's aid society promptly. Together, we can make Ontario the best place to grow up for all of us and all of our children.

Purple is the colour of child abuse prevention, so today I proudly wear a purple ribbon in support of ending all forms of child abuse, and I urge all of my colleagues to do the same.

I'd like to conclude by saying thank you to the caring folks at the children's aid societies across the province, staff and volunteers, for the valuable services they provide to those in need: our most precious gift, our children.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I too am proud to stand in the assembly today to recognize October as Small Business Month. This very week, we also celebrate Ontario agriculture, which is, incidentally, Ontario's number one industry, and I have to say I'm saddened that the minister did not even recognize this fact earlier. But I'm proud to note that it was a PC government in the late 1990s that actually started Small Business Month in Ontario.

When I think about celebrating small business, I think of my visit just this past Friday to P&H elevators in Amberley. They want to be assured that the government of Ontario understands the pressures impacting their business, such as the industrial tax rate they are currently

forced to pay. They're looking for tax relief, much like the minister referenced earlier in his comments.

I also think of my visit to Superheat in Kincardine, an innovative business providing good-paying jobs to almost 100 people, some of whom, I need to add, are new teachers who can't get a teaching job under the current rule of this Liberal government. Superheat is a business based on a patented process that can grow in market demand if they can build the capacity to compete globally.

Throughout the month of October, there will be many initiatives that acknowledge small business as the backbone to Ontario's economy. The Huron Manufacturing Association will do just that, later in November.

Yesterday I met with the Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association. Unfortunately, they represent another industry frustrated with the lack of stability and lack of predictability that the current Liberal government has generated over the past decade.

Of course, I worry about the ever-rising issue of energy costs and the burden of red tape, because the PC Party of Ontario is the only party with a viable business plan to reduce red tape and return the province's small businesses back to a path of prosperity.

BREAST CANCER

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add my little one minute and 20 seconds to Breast Cancer Awareness Month. This is something that has done very well in our province.

I want to thank a lady, Michele Girash, who is the community development specialist for northern Ontario, for the fantastic activities that we have in northern Ontario in support of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

I want to say a big thank you to the Sudbury firefighters, who have painted their humongously big fire truck hot pink for the month. It is so cool. It has this great big ribbon on it. They were kind enough to let my leader, Andrea Horwath, sit in the driver's seat of this wonderful pink truck this weekend. Whenever they go down the street—not to a call but coming back from a call—they go very slowly because everybody wants to take a picture of this thing. It has very positive messages on the side which basically say that if you look after your breast health, if you make sure that you seek help when you see something is not right, then you can beat this disease.

I want to thank people like Cecile Harris, my mother-in-law—who will be 91 in a couple of weeks—who is 25 years cancer-free. She had to fight the battle and she won, like many others.

I want to thank all of the people from Sudbury who participated in the Run for the Cure this Sunday. It was a miserable day in Sudbury. It just poured rain, it was windy—the whole thing—but thousands of people came out in support for Run for the Cure and the breast screening program. It really works well.

Thank you. My time is up.

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to add my voice to help raise awareness about the role we can all play in the prevention of child abuse.

Child abuse comes in many forms. Some children show the bruises, or worse, of physical abuse, while others have experienced sexual exploitation that leaves untold damage on the child, which can last a lifetime. Some children are exposed to domestic violence, and when they are, even though they themselves have not been struck, the violence leaves deep emotional scars.

We have heard too many times of children who were neglected—one of the most extreme being Jeffrey Baldwin, whose horrifying story is before the coroner's inquest today. We weep for Jeffrey, and for all other children who suffer as a result of child abuse. And we will continue to weep, but as we do, we must be watchful so that we do our part in preventing child abuse.

We must watch for unexplained injuries. We must listen to children, watch their actions and recognize changes in their behaviour, such as eating or sleeping patterns. We must take note if we notice that a child displays fear of an adult or has become secretive for no apparent reason. And if we feel a child is or may be in need of protection, we have a legal duty to report it.

Our child welfare agencies are given great powers to act on those reports, but they must act in a way that shows compassion; act in a way that, first and foremost, ensures the safety and well-being of a child, but also provides support for vulnerable families that are struggling.

It has been said many times that it takes a village to raise a child, and that is the absolute truth.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, it's my pleasure to recognize the central role that small businesses play in our province's economy. Over 97% of Ontario employers are essentially small businesses.

There is always talk of job creators in this place. Of course, we should always be talking about job creation. In a time of persistent unemployment, especially for youth, how we can create jobs in Ontario should be a topic of paramount importance.

Small businesses are incredible job creators. In fact, small business owners created their own jobs.

On this side of the House, in the last budget session, we tried to put forward a job creator tax credit plan. We also put forward a progressive plan for youth unemployment. Actually, this is an issue that needs to be accelerated in the province of Ontario, because Ontario's youth unemployment rate is hovering between 16.9% and 17%.

As I said last year during Small Business Month, we can and should optimize our potential by supporting entrepreneurial small business.

Iain Klugman, president and CEO of Communitech, in his op-ed in the Financial Post last year, pointed out, "We should be looking chiefly to our entrepreneurs to commercialize new ideas and innovations."

Governments can and should foster this spirit so that more small businesses can expand, grow and hire.

PETITIONS

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

"Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

"Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents' physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

"Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

"Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

"Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

"That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as not to require disposal in landfills."

This petition, Mr. Speaker, was presented to me by Bryan Smith of Sweaburg, and we thank him for his efforts. I thank Massoma for delivering it to the table.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario :

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

1550

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for

people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this and will affix my signature.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

"Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

"Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

"Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

"Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

"Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

"Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

"To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I fully support the petition, and I ask page Megan to take it to the desk.

SHALE BEACH

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation closed public access to Shale Beach off Highway 26 in the town of Blue Mountains suddenly and with no consultation; and

"Whereas the closure will impact fisherman, swimmers and visitors who have been frequenting the beach for generations with no problem; and

"Whereas the closure will remove one of the only wheelchair-accessible fishing locations in the area; and

"Whereas the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government won't let Ontarians enjoy anything for free anymore without implementing a new tax or a new fee;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Premier Kathleen Wynne and the Minister of Transportation immediately restore access to Shale Beach so that residents can continue to enjoy the beach and all that it has to offer for generations to come."

I certainly agree with this petition, and I will sign it.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is recognized as one of the leading primary care providers in northwestern Ontario, providing essential services to those living in not only Ignace, but across northwestern Ontario; and

"Whereas a 2010 rent increase by the government of Ontario has threatened the long-term viability of the health centre's operations; and

"Whereas the rent being charged to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre is much higher than rent being charged to similar operations in other communities and far surpasses 'market rent' for a small community in northwestern Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately rectify the situation and ensure the long-term viability of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre by either reducing rent, transferring ownership of the building to the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre, or through capital funds to build a new facility that better suits the community's needs."

I fully support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Efua to deliver to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition and affix my name to it—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further petitions?

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas, beginning January 1, 2013, WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

"Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119."

I am pleased to affix my signature and send the petition to the table with page Erica.

INDOOR TANNING EQUIPMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: I am pleased to present thousands and thousands of petitions in support of the skin cancer prevention bill. They read as follows:

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence linking tanning bed use to increased cancer risk, the World Health Organization considers tanning beds a group 1 carcinogen, and use of tanning beds before the age of 30 raises one's risk of melanoma by 75%; and

"Whereas many groups, including the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Medical Association, support a ban on the use of indoor tanning equipment by youths under the age of 18; and

"Whereas the provinces of British Columbia and Nova Scotia have passed legislation banning youths from using indoor tanning equipment, and governments around the world are considering similar legislation; and

"Whereas there is broad public support in Ontario for increased regulation of the tanning industry, with 83% supporting a ban on indoor tanning for those under 18;

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning youths under the age of 18 from using indoor tanning equipment except in the case of medical need."

I fully support this petition, Madam Speaker, and I hope I'm presenting it for the last time. I will ask page Ravicha to bring it to the table.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

"Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

"Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially" those on fixed incomes; and

"Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper *Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy*;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges."

I agree with this petition and will be passing it on to page Daniel.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in northwestern Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this petition and will affix my signature and give it to page Taylor to deliver it.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Betty Schneider for presenting me with this wind turbine petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

"Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

1600

"Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada's draft renewable energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

"Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given."

Madam Speaker, I agree with this petition and will sign it.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

M^{me} France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui nous vient surtout du nord-est de l'Ontario.

« Attendu qu'il existe un nombre croissant de cas signalés d'abus, de négligence et de soins de qualité inférieure pour nos personnes âgées dans les foyers de soins de longue durée; et

« Attendu que les personnes ayant des plaintes ont peu d'options, et souvent ne le font pas parce qu'ils craignent des répercussions, ce qui suggère qu'un trop grand nombre de personnes âgées sont laissées dans des situations vulnérables, sans surveillance indépendante; et

« Attendu que l'Ontario est une de seulement deux provinces au Canada où l'ombudsman n'a pas de contrôle indépendant de nos foyers de soins de longue durée. Nous avons besoin de la responsabilité, de la

transparence et de la cohérence dans notre système de soins de longue durée. »

Par conséquent, ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario d'élargir le mandat de l'ombudsman afin d'inclure les foyers de soins de longue durée de l'Ontario et ainsi protéger nos aînés, les personnes les plus vulnérables.

J'appuie cette pétition, madame. Je vais y apposer mon nom et demander à Ravicha de l'amener aux greffiers.

AIR QUALITY

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Some days you're first; some days you're last.

"Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario's automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

"Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

"Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

"Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced"—rigorously—"by the Ministry of the Environ-ment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham and present it to Peyton, one of the finest pages here.

Interjection: From Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. John O'Toole: From Leeds–Grenville, as well.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION
ACT (TANNING BEDS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION
DU CANCER DE LA PEAU
(LITS DE BRONZAGE)

Ms. Matthews moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments for

tanning / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet à des fins de bronzage.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the Legislature today to speak to legislation that I introduced on March 7 that, if passed, would protect Ontario's young people from the harmful effects of artificial ultraviolet radiation by prohibiting the use of tanning beds for youth under 18. The legislation would also prohibit the marketing of tanning services targeted at youth under 18. It would require tanning bed operators to request identification for anyone who appears to be under the age of 25, with fines for operators who fail to comply. This bill would also restrict self-tanning by prohibiting the use of tanning beds that do not require the presence of an attendant.

Speaker, this is not the first time legislation like this has been brought before the House. I would like to recognize the efforts of the member from Nickel Belt in introducing private member's Bill 74, An Act to help prevent skin cancer, 2012, during the last legislative session. And I'd like to recognize the efforts of former London–Fanshawe MPP Khalil Ramal, who introduced the Skin Cancer Prevention Act in 2008 and co-sponsored the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2010, with the member from Nickel Belt. I'd also like to thank former Scarborough–Guildwood MPP Margaret Best for her efforts to restrict tanning for youth in Ontario.

So, Speaker, I think we're almost there. I'm pleased that this bill has passed second reading. I want to say thank you to the members of the Standing Committee on General Government for the work they've done to expeditiously examine this bill and report it back to the House for third reading.

This proposed legislation represents common ground for all the members in this House. We all recognize that prohibiting the use of indoor tanning for our youth is absolutely the right thing to do. Too many Ontarians are diagnosed with cancer every year. Our sons and our daughters, our sisters and brothers, our parents, our loved ones, our friends—each of us knows too many people who wake up every day to face and fight this disease. We are so fortunate to have so many highly educated, dedicated health professionals who fight alongside of them. But I do think that it's incumbent upon us, as legislators, to do what we can do to prevent cancer in the first place, especially where our kids are involved.

Speaker, the dangers associated with exposure to artificial ultraviolet radiation have been well documented. The World Health Organization puts tanning beds in the same highest cancer risk category as asbestos and smoking.

In 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer, an expert committee that makes recommendations to the World Health Organization, reclassified UV-emitting tanning devices as carcinogenic to humans.

Tanning bed use increases the risk of malignant melanoma by 17%. More importantly, that risk increases to 75% if tanning bed use begins before the age of 35. Despite the warnings and the well-known risks, tanning bed use by young people is on the rise. Between 2006 and 2012, tanning bed use by grade 11 and 12 students more than doubled, from 7% to 16%, and the incidence of melanoma in Ontario has been rising in young people between ages 15 and 34.

This proposed legislation takes on this challenge directly so that we can protect our children from the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation. I'm confident that this proposed legislation will make an important difference in our fight to prevent cancer.

There are many individuals and organizations who have been warning us about the dangers of tanning bed use by youth and advocating for legislation like this. Their hard work and activism has helped to bring this proposed legislation to this point—being debated today at third reading—and I'd like to recognize and thank a number of them.

Speaker, when I first introduced this legislation, we heard from Susan Cox. Susan is living with melanoma. Her story is powerful and heartbreaking. I'd like to thank her again for sharing her story with us.

I'd like to recognize Kate Neale, who has worked very hard to bring this issue to the forefront. She has been a real champion for cancer prevention. She came to Queen's Park to make sure all of us know about the dangers of youth tanning and the importance of restricting access to tanning by young people.

I want to recognize the hard work of the Canadian Cancer Society, represented today in the Legislature by Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare.

I'd like to recognize the Ontario Medical Association, the Canadian Dermatology Association, the Melanoma Network of Canada and so many others who have stressed the importance of taking action against indoor tanning by young people.

Individuals, organizations and MPPs have all come together to support this vital piece of proposed legislation and see it successfully through first reading, second reading and committee. As MPPs, we have debated it, examined it, and we will soon have an opportunity to pass it at third reading. We have demonstrated that this legislation represents common ground. We have shown that restricting access to youth indoor tanning is one of those issues where party lines disappear.

1610

If this legislation passes, we'll follow the lead of Ontario municipalities like Oakville, Peel and Belleville, and we'll join Quebec, British Columbia, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, all of which have already introduced a ban, and Manitoba, which has introduced parental consent.

I'd also like members to know that the proposed legislation is consistent with our commitment to make Ontario the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old. With that goal in mind, our government is

increasingly focused on prevention and keeping Ontarians healthy. And so we're putting more of our efforts into promoting healthy habits and behaviours, supporting lifestyle improvements and better managing chronic conditions. The legislation we're considering today is one more way in which we're working to protect and promote the good health of our future: Ontario's young people.

At the same time, it's consistent with the focus we have placed on fighting cancer in the province of Ontario. We are a leader in cancer care in Canada and around the world. In fact, an Ontarian who gets cancer has one of the best chances of survival anywhere in the world, according to the Cancer System Quality Index. At the Standing Committee on Social Policy, the member for Nickel Belt recently recognized that Ontario's cancer services "are one of the best in the world.... We have an excellent health care system, an excellent cancer care system...." We know that our cancer care system has improved significantly in the past 10 years. We measure more, we know more and we report more, ensuring accountability and continued improvement.

There is much more work still to be done, but we have made considerable progress. We know that early detection is the key to fighting cancer, and that's why we broadened the Ontario Breast Screening Program, so that high-risk women are screened at a younger age. It's why we launched Canada's first province-wide colorectal screening program, and it's why we're now funding the PSA test to help detect the most common cancer among Canadian men.

We've also introduced tough legislation to combat smoking. With our Smoke-Free Ontario Strategy, we're determined to have the lowest smoking rates in Canada. Already, smoking rates have decreased from 24.5% in the year 2000 to about 19.4% in 2011. But we have more to do.

We're taking on childhood obesity with our Healthy Kids Panel, which has made a number of excellent recommendations that we're now considering. We know that childhood obesity could lead to chronic diseases like diabetes later in life. There's a connection between obesity and cancer, too.

Speaker, restricting tanning bed access to youth under 18 is the next step we must take to prevent cancer and protect our young people. As I've said in the past, this is not a "should do"; this is a "must do." This proposed legislation is a shining example of what we can do when we come together and find common ground for our shared priorities. I'm confident that this legislation responds to the evidence before us, and I'm counting on our united effort to take action to protect our youngest Ontarians from the risk of cancer. I'm asking all members to continue to support this important piece of legislation.

Again, I want to thank the many people and organizations that have worked so hard to restrict youth access to tanning, and finally, thank you to those who work hard every day in this province to help fight cancer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I am very pleased to rise today to voice our support for the Skin Cancer Prevention Act on this, the third reading. I would also like to welcome our guests in the gallery today: Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare, who have been faithful visitors in this gallery on many occasions as this bill has been introduced and reintroduced—but I can say we're almost there. We're on third reading. It looks like it's got all-party support, so we're finally going to be moving forward on this very important piece of legislation, so I'd like to thank you for your advocacy throughout. You've educated all of us and we'll get there soon enough.

It has been debated. I'm not going to reiterate the comments that were made by the minister, but we all know of the dangers now associated with indoor skin-tanning booths for young people under the age of 18. There is mounting scientific evidence that suggests that this is quite dangerous, and it is a known carcinogen.

I would just like to quote from a couple of the organizations that we have been listening to. One is the World Health Organization. They have identified tanning beds as a known carcinogen. Previously, tanning beds were considered a probable carcinogen, but in 2009 they were upgraded from probable to known carcinogen, based on scientific evidence. Again, this puts tanning in the same category along with asbestos and tobacco, which is the highest-risk category of all.

We have also heard from Dr. Samir Gupta, the chair of the Ontario Medical Association's dermatology section. He stated, "The evidence has been unequivocal over the last several years that tanning bed radiation is linked to skin cancer.... It's the sun exposure you're getting in your early years that predicts skin cancer later on." I wish we'd known that when I was young, Madam Speaker, but we know now, and we need to protect young people from it.

I think probably the greatest advocate and the person who spoke most powerfully in favour of this legislation was Ms. Kate Neale, who has been a visitor on a number of occasions on this issue. She came with the Canadian Cancer Society in their presentation before the committee on Bill 30. Kate used to be a frequent tanner; in fact, she worked in a suntanning location, and she is now a huge advocate against youth using sun tanning beds.

She started using the beds when she was a 16-year-old with light and sunburn-prone skin. She first started tanning two or three times a week, but then started doing 12 to 16 minutes in the highest-UVB-pressure bed up to 16 times a month. The maximum recommended time in this bed was 12 minutes, but the salon in this case allowed customers to tan in the bed for up to 30 minutes. She continued and then, unfortunately, in May 2011, at age 21, Kate was diagnosed with melanoma.

Fortunately, her treatments seem to be working at this point, and we wish her recovery in every respect, but she is now a huge advocate. Again, I hope that any young

people who may be either listening to this or may hear about it will take these words to heart, because, of course, all young people think that this sort of thing will never happen to them, but certainly Kate's experience shows that it can happen to any young person. We certainly thank her for her bravery in coming forward with this story.

As we promised at the end of second reading on this bill, we did want to see it move through committee quickly and to move it forward. I'm happy to say that that did happen. This bill came before the committee on September 18. We heard from a number of witnesses; I have my list here somewhere. We heard from the Lupus Foundation of Ontario; the Joint Canadian Tanning Association; as mentioned, the Canadian Cancer Society; the Allied Beauty Association; Peel Public Health; Uvalux Tanning and Support; and the Canadian Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association.

I'm happy to say that no one was against this legislation. They did, however, have some amendments that they wished to bring forward, which I think were sensible. Not all of the amendments, of course, passed. We went through clause-by-clause consideration in committee on September 23, but there were several amendments that were passed that strengthened the legislation and cleared up any confusion that there might have been about what the impact of the legislation would be.

Of course, what we're always looking for is to maintain a balance between the protection of the public and the legitimate business interests of the owners of these facilities. Of course, health and safety always have to come first, and I think that that's what we achieved with the clause-by-clause on this bill.

Just to speak to several of them, one was to clarify that ultraviolet light treatments were prohibited only for tanning purposes. There are other types of ultraviolet light treatments that are used in some of these operations and in a lot of salons, where ultraviolet light treatments are used for cosmetic purposes for nail treatments. This uses a minimal amount of ultraviolet light and certainly isn't what was meant to be captured by this legislation, so we did clarify that it was only ultraviolet light treatments for tanning purposes that were being banned.

1620

The other amendment that was brought forward was really to deal with the whole issue of self-tanning, because if you're going to be restricting tanning beds to young people under 18 not being able to use them, you want to make sure that they can't circumvent them by using coin-operated machines. Although we haven't seen a lot of use of these kinds of machines in Ontario, evidence suggests that they are coming.

So we, the PC Party—and the NDP also put forward a very similar prohibition—added a new section to the bill that indicated that, "No person who owns an establishment where tanning services or ultraviolet light treatments for tanning are sold, offered for sale or provided shall permit the services or treatment to be provided by a device that does not require the presence of an

attendant.” Again, this is to get away from the fact of unregulated and unattended tanning beds where you can simply insert coins and nobody is going to ask you any questions about how old you are or what kind of skin you have, or give you advice with respect to some of these treatments if you have very fair, sun-burn-prone skin, and make sure that you’re going to be protected.

I’m pleased to say that those amendments did pass.

One amendment that I’d just like to speak about did not pass, and that was one that dealt with the whole issue of spray tanning, because we talked about this in the context of using the tanning beds and ultraviolet light treatments. Spray tanning doesn’t appear to have been meant to be caught by this prohibition. Because there is no clear scientific evidence that suggests that spray tanning poses a danger and it is not a carcinogen, I think everybody came to agreement on that, but the question is whether to deal with that in terms of the bill itself or to deal with it in the regulations. The decision was made to just leave it in the regulations. In the event that subsequent evidence comes forward to suggest that there is a danger, then we’ll be able to deal with it more quickly.

I think that most of the issues were satisfactorily resolved in the committee. I think we do have a very robust bill. We’re very pleased to support it and to move forward with it. I hope that we’ll be able to conclude this debate fairly quickly and get it moved forward and get the assent so we can put it into action.

I’m very pleased to have the opportunity and to thank all of the organizations that have been involved in bringing this bill forward for their persistence and advocacy, particularly the members from the Canadian Cancer Society. Thank you again for being here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate. The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{rs} France Gélinas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I must say that it feels pretty good to be standing here today, a day that I had hoped for for a very long time and a day that is happening right now. I thought I would use the time that has been allocated to me to talk a little bit as to how we got there.

It was not an easy road. It was a rather bumpy road, to tell you the truth, but the important thing is that we made it. It is about to become a reality. Finally, we will regulate the tanning industry. I’m really, really proud of this small step that Ontario is about to take.

Basically, what I will explain to you is what I call the four building blocks as to how do you get success, how do you go from having an idea that legislations need to happen to actually making it happen? So the four steps are really—I look at the science of the thing. Is this something worthwhile? Is this something you can do through legislation? Then you look at, how do you get support? How do you make it an issue with people? Is this something that matters to the people of Ontario?

I will tell you a little bit about the history of the bill—some of the successes and mainly failures—and also a little bit about keeping an eye as to what is happening in other jurisdictions.

If we start with the science of that, I come from 25 years in the health care system. I have spent quite a long time in hospitals, and quite a bit of time on an oncology unit at a time when cancer treatments were not always that successful. Things are changing for the better. I’ve been a politician for six years, and things are way better than they were six years ago.

Nevertheless, you saw a lot of people struggling. You see a lot of people going through hardship, and you see a lot of people losing their battles. A lot of this is preventable.

When you think of all of the cancers that are being diagnosed all the time, one out of three is a skin cancer. To put it in perspective, 80,000 people will get diagnosed with skin cancer this year, and a high number of them will be fighting melanoma, one of the deadliest types of skin cancer. If you look at youth between the ages of 16 and 25, the most common cancer is skin cancer. If you look at the differences between girls and boys, and young women and young men, you see that young women are way more affected by skin cancer, by the hundreds and the thousands and the tens of thousands of them developing skin cancer.

So you start to look at what is happening. The studies at the time started to show a link between the use of tanning beds and the sudden increase we were seeing in young women being diagnosed with skin cancer. Then in 2009, we had the “aha” moment. This is when the World Health Organization came out and clearly, for the world to see, classified tanning beds as a number one carcinogen; it gives cancer. Tanning beds had been quantified at the same level as cigarettes and arsenic, as being harmful to your health, as being directly linked to skin cancer. We saw a lot of people getting involved.

I felt pretty confident that the link between all of those new cases of skin cancer we saw in young women, and the sudden development of the tanning industry, was there. But to my knowledge, the tanning industry was already regulated, so why did they need one more bill?

So I did my homework. You start to look, and then you realize that, yes, there are voluntary guidelines that apply to tanning salons, that come from the federal health ministry. I started to look more deeply into those guidelines, and realized that they were just that: They were guidelines.

The Canadian Cancer Society, and more specifically, the Ontario division, did a ton of work to see if those guidelines were being followed. They actually sent some young people into 79 salons here in Toronto to see. They looked at their websites to see: Are they following the guidelines? Are they making sure that people with type 1, very fair skin never use those tanning beds? Are they making sure that the people who use them are of age? I did the same thing with the 13 tanning salons we have in Nickel Belt.

Basically, what we found out is that those guidelines were not being followed. Those guidelines were just that: They were there to guide an industry that did not want to be guided. They were there to guide an industry that put

profits ahead of making sure that they were protecting young lives. They needed to be regulated.

I felt that the homework had been done. We had a clear case. There was something we could do. At the end of the day, health promotion is my passion. If I can help move Ontario closer and closer to a healthy population, this is why I got elected; this is why I come here every day. This is something I wanted to do, but I knew I certainly could not do it alone. So you do what every other MPP does when they're trying to move things forward: They reach out. I call it bringing people under the tent. And they came. They came by the tens of thousands.

I want to talk about the petitions. I started a petition that was circulated around. I want to thank all of the MPPs who presented those petitions, and I want to thank the tens of thousands of people who signed those petitions—basically, clearly speaking to their government and telling them that they want this legislation to pass. They want regulations and legislation for the tanning industry. They don't want young people to have access to those beds.

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This petition was circulated throughout the province and was very well received. I presented, I would say, tens of thousands of names, and so did many of my colleagues. I want to talk specifically about the member from Leeds–Grenville, who also presented a lot of petitions in support of the legislation for tanning beds.

We also had a letter-writing campaign, and I was happy to see that a lot of young people took it upon themselves to write. Those were the people who are going to be affected by this. Those were the people who were not going to have access to tanning beds anymore. They wrote to all of us in the Legislative Assembly—I'm sure you have received those letters—and I received them by the boxful. Young people were getting engaged in the political process and asking their members of Parliament to do something for them. You don't see this very often. When you know that the age of people who go to vote—barely 25% of them come. In some regions, 21% of young people go and vote. And here we are, having tens of thousands of young people writing to their MPPs, asking them to do this. It was beautiful to see, and I thank all of you for having been part of this process.

Then came a ton of postcards. These are some of the postcards that came from my health unit, the Sudbury and District Health Unit. Dr. Penny Sutcliffe has been phenomenal in motivating a lot of young people in the northeast to write. The postcards were quite telling. They say, "No Tan Is Worth Dying For! Urge the government of Ontario to enact legislation that bans the use of artificial tanning equipment by youth under the age of 18. Show your support; sign a postcard." It was under the prevention and screening program of the northeast region.

Then, on the back of the postcard, was this message. Basically, it says, "I Support the Canadian Cancer Society's call to action for the government of Ontario to:

"—ban the use of artificial tanning equipment by youth under the age of 18;

"—prohibit the marketing of artificial tanning targeting youth;

"—develop and maintain a registry of artificial tanning equipment in Ontario;

"—ensure all staff operating artificial tanning equipment are trained on operation procedures, maintenance, and how to identify people at greater risk of developing cancer, particularly those with type I (fair) skin;

"—require that signage be placed in clear view of each bed clearly outlining the health risks of artificial tanning."

They went on with a little "Did You Know?" It says, "Did you Know?

"Exposure to ultraviolet radiation, such as that emitted from artificial tanning equipment, during childhood and adolescence can increase a person's risk of getting skin cancer both now and later in life.

"Melanoma is the second most common form of cancer in young Ontarians aged 15-34." Those statistics came from the Canadian Cancer Society.

It was very, very successful. I want to talk specifically the Sudbury and the Thunder Bay campus of the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. Pretty well every medical student in those two faculties took those postcards and circulated them around. Everywhere I went in northern Ontario where youth would gather, you would find those postcards.

Northern Ontario was not the only one to put a postcard campaign together. We had another campaign that I really like, because it goes, "Orange Is a Snack, Not a Skin Tone!" It has the picture of a big orange. It's from takeaction.cancer.ca. The hashtag for Twitter is called #tanbedban. I will read it for you. It goes as follows:

"I support the implementation of indoor tanning legislation that would:

"—restrict indoor tanning beds for youth under the age of 18;

"—ban indoor tanning promotion targeted at youth;

"—start a registry and licensing system so that we know where tanning beds are in our communities;

"—truly train all staff operating indoor tanning equipment;

"—clearly display the health risks associated with indoor tanning in salons." It went on to say, "I support the implementation of legislation that would ban indoor tanning for youth under the age of 18." Then they would sign their names to it.

"Orange Is a Snack, Not a Skin Tone!" was extremely successful. It was used mainly in southern Ontario in the region of Niagara, it was used in eastern Ontario, and the same: It was young people engaging with other young people to make sure that, first of all, the education about tanning beds was being done, because while you sign a postcard, you start to ask questions: "Why are you doing this?" "Really, tanning is not good for you."

We could start to work on some of the myths. One of my favourites is, "We're going away for the March break. I need a base tan."

Interjection.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I hate when I hear that—my colleague and I. You don't need a base tan. A tanned skin is a damaged skin. A base tan is not going to protect you from cancer; a base tan is what gives you cancer. Stay away from this. This is basically the industry—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Marketing.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, the marketing that has done their work. They have repeated this message enough times that Ontarians believed it, but it is not true. There is no safe tan. If you build a base tan, you expose yourself to skin cancer.

We had another postcard campaign that went on, and this one was also very creative. They were mainly young people who did that. They were colourful. This one is called, "You wouldn't burn your toast, so why burn your skin?" It's basically, "Tanned skin is damaged skin. Melanoma is a young person's disease. Using a tanning bed increases your risk of getting skin cancer by up to 71%." That was developed by reactniagara.ca. It comes from the Niagara area. Basically, on the back of it you would see burnt toast. It's called Niagara's Youth Care. "I support Bill 74"—at the time, the bill was called Bill 74; it then got called Bill 128 and it then got called Bill 30, but it was the Skin Cancer Prevention Act—"the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, in banning anyone under the age of 18 from using tanning beds." It came from the Niagara region public health under their React program.

I received thousands and thousands and thousands of those boxes of postcards that basically showed to me that this was a very well-received campaign. Youth got engaged. They did their work. They went through different events and talked to their peers.

Then we had the school pledge. I want to thank, once again, the Canadian Cancer Society for helping with this. Basically, they would go to different schools and make sure that the prom would be a tan-free prom. I attended some of them in my riding and some of them in Sudbury. But I'll always remember when I was at Lockerby Composite School, Lockerby high school: a big, big high school in Sudbury where they had called all their graduating classes. We were in the gymnasium with hundreds of kids in there, and representatives from the Sudbury chapter of the cancer society were there. They had brought forward a young woman who had dealt with skin cancer to talk to the group.

Then it would be my part. In my part, I would get them to take a pledge that said they would not use tanning equipment. It was interesting. There, like in every other high school, out of the hundreds of kids who are there, they almost all got up, except for four or five very pretty, tanned girls. To me, the message was very telling: They had received the education, they saw the pressure from their peers, but they were still convinced that they needed to tan, because when it comes time to take on the glamour industry, I'm sorry, but old folks like me will never cut it. There is no way we could do enough health promotion, disease prevention and social marketing to get to those girls. The glamour industry has us outnumbered, outspent and out-everything else.

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I became more and more convinced that the only way to do this was to enact legislation; let's just ban it altogether. As a mom who had to raise three teenage sons and daughters—we all know the struggle of raising teenagers. They want to go out. They want the car. They want to smoke. They want to drink. They want to have sex. They want to experiment with drugs. They want all sorts of stuff.

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: That woke us all up. Everyone is awake now.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I woke them up.

I'll speak about my kids. That's what they were like when they were teenagers. Yours were all angels, I know; mine were—lots of other people are facing this. You have to say no to your teenagers on so many fronts that some parents basically caved in when it came to tanning. You can only say no to your teenage girl so many times. After a while, when it comes between all of the choices in front of you, you cave in and you agree that she can tan, because you don't want the tattoo, you don't want the boyfriend and you don't want the drinking. You have to say yes someplace, and you say, "Well, I guess tanning is better."

We have taken this equation out of raising young people. It will now be—tomorrow, hopefully—the law in Ontario that there will be no more of that. I think that will be a good thing.

Then we had the day at Queen's Park that happened on April—you'd figure that the date would be tattooed in my mind—in April 2012. I will tell you the date very quickly—I forgot; I think it was the 22nd—when the cancer society came and did a day at Queen's Park. They organized a breakfast, they reached out to all of the MPPs, and it was really pleasant to see that we had support on all sides of the House. The petitions, the postcards and the work that the youth had done had done its work. There was finally wide-ranging support in the House for the bill to go through. I reintroduced the bill, it got support and we were making strides forward.

There were a few people—a few MPPs—who had issues. The volunteers who had come with the cancer society reported that back, and I think you know who you are. I went and had a little chat with them to explain to them what the bill would and would not do, and it became obvious that we had full support.

We also saw a big campaign on Facebook. For this, I want to say thank you to Lindsay Powley. Lindsay has put forward a very nice Facebook page called "No tan is worth dying for." It was in line with the postcard campaign and, basically, it was a way for young people to reach out to other young people and to get everybody to like the page. That was also very successful in doing the groundwork of health promotion to reach out to youth, as well as useful in reaching out through social media.

At the same time as all of that was happening, the health unit came to the rescue. There are some of them that I really want to thank personally for all of the work

that they have done to move this page forward. I want to thank Jeff Scott, who is a councillor in Countryside in the city of Kingston, and I want to thank Liz Schell, because both of those councillors have moved regulations within the town of Kingston to ban indoor tanning, and those regulations came because they couldn't see the day when Ontario would finally move and bring a ban for the entire province, so they brought matters into their own hands and tried to help.

I also want to thank Gary Scripnick, who is the chair of the board of health of the Porcupine Health Unit. The Porcupine Health Unit has done a lot of work to make sure that everybody on board in the far northeast of our province was supportive of the tanning bill.

I want to thank the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and, more particularly, Mr. Mac Bain, who is the chairperson of the board of health and who passed a resolution showing that the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit supported the tanning bill.

I want to thank the Services de santé du Timiskaming Health Unit and, more specifically, their board chair, and councillors Merdy Armstrong and Sue Nielsen, for their support. That health unit also passed a resolution in support of the tanning bill, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act.

Of course, I want to thank my own health unit, the Sudbury and District Health Unit, le Service de santé publique de Sudbury, which, through its medical officer of health, Mrs. Penny Sutcliffe, made sure that Sudbury was on the books as supportive. They also helped me go to the city of greater Sudbury, where we went to the councillor and presented at city council to see if the city of Sudbury would be willing to bring regulations that would be specific to the city because it took so long for the province to move. But we are there now, and I am happy.

I want to thank the prevention and screening network for the northeast region—the Algoma health unit, the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, the Porcupine Health Unit, the Sudbury and District Health Unit and the Timiskaming Health Unit. All together, they work on the prevention and screening network for the northeast region, and they have been a tremendous advocate. A lot of the posters, postcards and petitions that you've seen—they were the people behind it. Somebody had to pay for those postcards and somebody had to pay for the distribution of those postcards and gather them all up, and that network was really instrumental.

To Dr. Allan Northan, who was the medical officer of health of the Algoma health unit; Dr. Penny Sutcliffe, medical officer of health at the Sudbury and District Health Unit; Dr. Susan Kaczmarek, who is the medical officer of health of the Porcupine Health Unit; Dr. Jim Chirico, who is the medical officer of health of the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit; and Pat Logan, who was the acting medical officer of health for the Timiskaming Health Unit: Thank you so much for all the help you have done, bringing this bill forward. Your efforts have paid off.

I want to thank Carman Kidd from the board of health of the Timiskaming Health Unit for what he has done, and Barry Ward, who is the board chair for the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, for all the work that he has done.

There is also the Canadian Paediatric Society. The Canadian Paediatric Society put together a very compelling report that basically supported the bill and also showed the effect it was having on their young patients. The pediatric society deals with children, and they put together a summary of all of the evidence for banning children and youth under the age of 18 from commercial tanning facilities. The research that they had done was very compelling. It was well done and certainly helped put our case forward.

I want to thank the Ottawa Public Health unit and, more specifically, their chair of the board of the city of Ottawa health unit—her name is Diane Holmes—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Holmes.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes; the member from that area knows her—for all the work that she has done. Ottawa has been very active in making sure that they were full partners in bringing this forward.

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You have to realize that, for the health units that commit, a lot of the work that will follow up with that bill, the registry and the enforcement of that bill, will be the responsibility of the health unit. The health units were really showing that they were willing and able partners, willing to take on this task.

I also want to thank Pat Madill, who is the regional clerk for Durham region, who also made sure that their region had endorsed the regulation of the tanning industry. The support was really building, and I thank them for that.

Something fun that was started in the northeast is that young writers—but you're talking, like, sometimes in elementary school, sometimes in early high school—would write letters to the editor. J'aimerais remercier Jessica MacLean, qui est de l'école secondaire Champlain à Chelmsford dans mon comté, qui a écrit, en mai cette année, dans la revue Tapage. La revue Tapage est une revue francophone qui est distribuée avec le journal Le Voyageur dans une grosse partie du Nord-Est. C'est un journal francophone qui reconnaît l'importance des jeunes, et Jessica MacLean avait écrit un article sur le bronzage artificiel. Cela avait été vraiment bien reçu, et il y avait eu plusieurs commentaires. Je la nomme, elle, parce qu'elle y avait fait beaucoup de recherches. Il était vraiment bien fait, et il y en avait beaucoup d'autres qui ont fait la même chose qu'elle.

J'aimerais également remercier—I also wanted to thank somebody who was here for a long time, Mr. Dalton McGuinty. Dalton had clearly showed—he had phoned me one day to tell me that I had his support for this piece of legislation. Certainly, when he was Premier of the province at the time, when you get the Premier to phone you to say that you have his support, you sort of feel that you're gaining momentum.

And of course, Kate Neale: When Kate participated in our press conference last spring—it was in the spring of 2012—it was quite touching and quite moving. We've talked about how brave she is to be the face of what the use of tanning beds does to a young person. If you don't know Kate, she is one of those drop-dead gorgeous young ladies. She is very pretty. She is eloquent. She is full of life, full of ambition, an excellent ambassador to talk to her peers about the dangers of tanning beds. She's also a cancer survivor. She has dealt with many bouts of skin cancer.

So that was part of what we did to garner support, to make sure that all 107 MPPs in this place knew what this bill was about and knew why it needed to move forward.

Let me tell you a little bit of what happened at the legislative level. At the legislative level, you will all know that back in 2009, it was Khalil Ramal who had presented the Skin Cancer Prevention Act. At the time, we could not co-sponsor the bill; it came shortly after. His bill was supported past second reading, and nothing was done. Not to be put off by that, we, together, co-sponsored the bill. I figured, "Well, if I gave my support to a Liberal bill and it didn't pass, maybe we'll be luckier if we put our efforts together." So he and I reintroduced the bill; it was the same thing, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act. It then was given the number Bill 31. So, Bill 31 was co-sponsored by a Liberal and an NDPer and basically said, "It's time to regulate the tanning industry." That was in 2010, and nothing happened.

Then in 2012, I decided to try again. By then, we had had all of the postcards. All of the MPPs had been talked to. The Canadian Cancer Society had invested tons of resources. The Ontario division of the cancer society had done their work: They had trained the volunteers; they had gone to their MPPs. The work had been done. We had everybody's support. That was called Bill 74.

Then, on October 2, we presented Bill 126, and the next day, the House prorogued—which is a word that sounds like "perogies," but believe me, it doesn't taste the same at all in my mouth. That means that the bill went nowhere. That was really disappointing.

So I had tried to support a Liberal bill; it went nowhere. I had tried to co-sponsor a bill that went nowhere. I had put it forward by myself twice; that went nowhere. And then the Minister of Health approached me and said, "How about we make it a government bill?" And this is Bill 30.

By this point, everything else had been tried, with very limited success, so I kind of felt like, "What have I got to lose?" I asked her one question: "How fast?" By that time, there was a ton of people who had done a ton of work, and I kind of felt that the patience was running thin. She said, "Fast." So I said, "Well, what does 'fast' mean?" She said, "Very fast." "All right. What does 'very fast' mean?" I got nowhere with that, but I kind of got the idea that she was going to move that through the House quickly.

You have to understand that, with my usual luck—we each get a ballot date as to when we can bring a bill

forward when we're in opposition. As a private member's bill, I think I'm, like, fifth from last. I'm in February 2014. Here's the Minister of Health, who can move bills through the House whenever she sees fit. It sounded like a good deal; I gave her the bill.

It then became Bill 30. We have got many changes of numbers, but the bill itself hasn't changed. It is to regulate the industry to ban teens under the age of 18, to make sure that there are warnings, that we know where they are, that there is education so that you cannot have promotions targeting youth for tanning. The bill stayed the same. The numbers changed many times through that long story.

Throughout all this, we always kept an eye as to what was happening in other jurisdictions, because although the research had been done upfront as to, yes, that was pretty solid evidence between use of tanning beds and what it does to skin cancer, many, many years had passed. So I kept an eye.

I'd like to say a special thank you. J'aimerais remercier Maryse Gaudreault, qui est la députée de Hull. Elle siège à l'Assemblée nationale du Québec et elle m'avait fait parvenir le projet de loi 74, la Loi visant à prévenir les cancers de la peau causés par le bronzage artificiel, qui avait été présenté par M. Yves Bolduc, le ministre de la Santé et des Services sociaux.

When I first presented that bill and when Ontario first presented that bill, we would have been one of the first ones to bring legislation for the tanning industry. As the weeks turned into months that turned into years that turned into way too long, other jurisdictions beat us to the punch. We have Nova Scotia, we have British Columbia, we have Quebec, we have PEI, and we have Newfoundland and Labrador that have all brought forward legislation before us. But rest assured, Madam Speaker, we are about to change this, because when I sit down, that will be the end of third reading for this bill, and tomorrow, hopefully by about a quarter to 12, we will have voted unanimously—I don't know this; I'm just speculating—in favour of this bill, and Ontario will be in good company with all of those other jurisdictions.

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There are a number of agencies that have put public support for this, and I would like to read some of them into the record. It goes as follows: "A poll completed on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society in June 2001 showed that 83% of Ontarians support restricting youth under 18 years from indoor tanning. If that isn't enough for Ontario to take action, a recent survey of indoor tanning among youth aged 12 to 17 years found that a shocking one in 10 of all teens are using tanning beds, which is up 5% from six years ago." That comes from Martin Kabat, who is the CEO of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario Division. He ends by saying, "The time to enact indoor tanning legislation to protect the health of our youth is now!"

Then, Madame Annette Cyr, who is the chair of the Melanoma Network of Canada—melanoma is a form of skin cancer—says, "Although melanoma is the most

deadly form of skin cancer, it is highly preventable. Up to 90% of melanoma cases are a direct result of exposure to UV radiation which is caused by either sunshine or indoor tanning beds. The World Health Organization has classified indoor tanning beds as a 'known carcinogen to humans,' putting it in the same classification as tobacco or asbestos."

I had many, many more. I had Leona Yez, the executive director of the Canadian Skin Cancer Foundation: "Children's skin is more sensitive to UV radiation than that of adults. As a result, anyone under the age of 18 is at greater risk for developing cancer when exposed to UV."

We have a number of dermatologists and a number of other physicians. I see that I am running out of time. I had Denise Wexler, the president of the Canadian Dermatology Association. All of them went public and pushed the government to act.

I went through this because I wanted to see the struggle it was to do something right, something that is not political, something that is not divisive—something that should have been done. We are finally coming close to the finish line. I have practised my happy dance, I must tell you. Tomorrow at a quarter to 12, you will see a full-blown—behind the closed curtain of my office—happy dance, because I have waited for a long time for that piece of legislation to come forward.

I want to thank Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina, who are here, who have come time after time whenever we debated the bill. It's done. Third reading is done. Hallelujah.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise in the House today to speak further to our proposed legislation that, if passed, would protect Ontario's young people from the harmful effects of exposure to ultraviolet radiation caused by tanning beds. This legislation is an example of what we can achieve when we work together and find common ground on our shared priorities.

Like the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, I am pleased that the bill, which would prohibit the use of tanning beds by young people under age 18, has passed second reading. I know that the Standing Committee on General Government has carefully considered this legislation.

I was present at the committee meeting in which we heard from a number of delegations that provided us with thoughtful input during their presentations. These delegations included the Lupus Foundation of Ontario, the Joint Canadian Tanning Association, the Canadian Cancer Society, the Allied Beauty Association, Peel Public Health, Uvalux Tanning and Support, and the Canadian Cosmetic, Toiletry and Fragrance Association. The committee also received written submissions from the South East Regional Cancer Program and Cancer Centre of Southeastern Ontario at Kingston General Hospital.

Taken together, the considered input of these groups helped to guide the committee in its examination of this

proposed legislation. The remarks of members on both sides of the aisle within the House, at committee and outside the walls of the Legislative Assembly show that this is an area where all members find common ground. When the first private member's bill on this subject was introduced by the former member from London—Fanshawe, certainly I stood in my place and supported it. This was followed by the private member's bill alluded to by the member from Nickel Belt, and again, she received support for that.

It is clear that each member of this House recognizes the importance of restricting access to tanning beds for young people in this province. Cancer claims too many of our parents; it claims too many of our children. Every one of us has been touched by cancer. Each of us knows the responsibility to help those who are faced with this terrible disease.

The responsibility to prevent cancer in the first place is just as great. It is a moral responsibility we feel because we know so many have to fight this deadly disease every day, but it is also a responsibility we feel as legislators. With this proposed legislation, we have an opportunity to help prevent our young people all across Ontario from getting this disease.

As a physician and former medical officer of health—and thank you to the member for Nickel Belt for complimenting those of my colleagues who have been so supportive of this legislation. Certainly we in public health are all too aware of the ravages wrought by malignant skin cancers like melanoma. I'm sure nobody in this House needs me to tell them that these cancers can be aggressive and fatal. The good news is that we know one of the major causes of this kind of cancer: exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

I hope, in the course of some educational efforts around tanning bed use, that people will also realize that exposure to the sun—ultraviolet radiation from that source—can be extremely dangerous as well. You never, ever want your skin to burn.

We do have some knowledge in terms of prevention, and in particular, when it comes to tanning beds, there is strong, growing evidence associating the use of tanning beds with an increased risk of contracting skin cancers, including basal cell carcinoma, a relatively benign form of skin cancer, and the far more dangerous squamous cell carcinoma and, of course, malignant melanoma. We also know that those dangers are greater for young people, and I want to repeat something we have already heard this afternoon because I think it's important: The risk of getting melanoma increases by 75% when people use tanning beds before the age of 35.

Despite this risk, more and more young people are using tanning beds every year. It is no coincidence that, therefore, more and more young people are being diagnosed with melanoma every year. Clearly, we must do something to help prevent this risk to the health of our sons and daughters, and there is a growing consensus that the time to act is now.

Our government's commitment to cancer prevention is a key part of our action plan for health care. This action

plan was released by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care early in 2012. It called for a fundamental shift in how health care is delivered in Ontario to protect our universal public health care system for generations to come. It called for the kind of change we could only bring about by working together: government and opposition, legislators and health professionals, policy-makers and front-line workers. All Ontarians must work together if we are to bring about a full-scale shift in the way we understand health care and how it's delivered.

A key part of that is our increased emphasis on health promotion and disease prevention. We want Ontarians to live healthier lives. We recognize, quite simply, that the best way to fight a disease like cancer is to prevent it. We have made tremendous progress since the action plan was introduced, and this proposed legislation is consistent with that fundamental shift and that co-operation between advocates, scientists, health care workers and members of all parties in this House. It's up to every one of us as individuals to live healthy and active lives, but I believe government has a vital and constructive role to play in creating a climate that fosters this. Therefore, it is important that government partners with all Ontarians in order to help Ontario families live healthier lives.

As individuals, we do what we need to do in order to stay healthy. As legislators, however, our responsibility is to all Ontarians, to help protect them, especially the youngest of them, from disease. That's why we've toughened tobacco laws, banning smoking in public places, and that's why we're encouraging more Ontarians to quit smoking as part of Smoke-Free Ontario.

1710

The proposed legislation we are considering today is consistent with our action to protect young people from second-hand smoke. It's time to work together across political lines to protect young people from artificial ultraviolet radiation. I believe that this proposed legislation responds to the evidence and addresses a serious health issue in a fiscally responsible manner.

The proposed legislation, as the minister has already remarked, also has had a number of antecedents and a tremendous amount of support inside and outside of this chamber. Members of all three parties have shown a commitment to swiftly bringing this proposed legislation to final confirmation at the end of third reading. The bill has been fruitfully debated and carefully considered at committee. The evidence is clear, and need for quick action acknowledged by all of us.

Now I am calling on all members of the House to support Bill 30's passage. We would then be able to develop supporting documents like protocols and guidelines for public health units which will enforce the act, train public health inspectors and bring about the regulations we need to support the legislation. The faster we can pass and implement this proposed legislation, the better. It's time we took this next step to help protect the lives of young Ontarians.

I would like to once again thank the many people and organizations who have worked tirelessly to educate and

advocate on this issue. They have made the risks of indoor tanning bed use by young people clear to all of us, and they have been strong advocates for restricting its use by the youth of Ontario.

I also want to thank the many thousands of Ontarians who take up arms every day in the battle against this terrible disease: the doctors and nurses who care for cancer patients, the educators and advocates who help Ontarians to make informed decisions that will keep them healthy and the scientists searching for a cure. I want to sincerely thank them for the work they do every day. And I want to thank the many Ontarians who have to fight this disease up close, those who have loved ones afflicted with cancer and those who have it themselves. All of us are inspired by the simple courage they show each and every day.

The battle isn't over, but this legislation, if passed, will help to sway the odds for many Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 30, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, this government's proposed legislation on tanning beds. Madam Speaker, I have a definite personal connection. I have a sister Bonnie and my mom, who are both cancer survivors, and unfortunately, I lost my dear sister Marjorie 14 years ago. It wasn't tanning bed cancer; it was lung cancer. But at the end of the day, cancer is cancer, and it needs to be stamped out. My legacy to my sister is to fight every day that I can to make change wherever we can, particularly when there are youth involved.

The other side of it is Terry Fox. He has always been my idol. What he did for our country and for people with cancer, to me, is just monumental. So again, any time I can step up and do my little part, it's absolutely a pleasure and a privilege.

Before I begin, I would like to recognize the efforts of those who have worked hard and advocated for years for safe use of tanning beds: the Canadian Cancer Society. We have Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare, who I had the privilege of working with in my former critic role as deputy health critic, and Kate Neale, of course, our survivor who has very eloquently brought her thoughts here and shared with us her personal challenges.

In my own riding, I have been lobbied by many volunteers and staff members of the Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound Canadian Cancer Society, in particular, Lera Ryan, Geoff Van Geem and Susan Hewitson. Just last week Rethink Breast Cancer was in to visit me and lobby and put their platform forward.

We need to do what we could have done many, many years ago, I believe. This is the second time around for me, and France Gélinas, I know, has brought this a number of times. I'd like to acknowledge France, Minister Matthews and our tireless champion and health care critic, Christine Elliott, for all their work to ensure that this got to this point, to third reading.

Bill 30 is in response to evidence that indoor tanning beds, and ultraviolet UV-radiation-emitting tanning

devices, tanning beds and lamps, are the most dangerous form of cancer-causing radiation. Like tobacco and like asbestos, tanning beds are now a known carcinogen. In fact, research by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, IARC, shows that tanning is especially harmful to young people: "Those who use sunbeds before age 30 increase their lifetime risk of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, by 75%."

Madam Speaker, I have a dozen nieces and nephews and 15 great-nephews and great-nieces, and again, this legislation, in my mind, is for them. It's going to ensure that they do not go down that perilous path when they don't know really at that age what they're doing to themselves and create harm that may be irreparable. I do this with great sincerity and want to ensure that we do in fact move this forward as quickly as possible.

IARC also pointed to studies showing a link between UV radiation from indoor tanning devices and melanomas of the skin and eyes. For perspective, I would like to add that melanoma will be diagnosed in 5,000 and kill an estimated 940 people in Canada this year alone. We need to prevent this. We need to do whatever we can. Given these alarming numbers, it is incumbent upon us to protect our children and youth by using regulatory powers to restrict the use of indoor tanning beds by persons under the age of 18.

The current lack of controls affects millions of teenagers. According to a national survey, and I quote, "Teenagers are the most likely to try to get a tan, either from the sun or by using tanning equipment." It adds that indoor tanning is more common among young women than young men and older adults, with 27% of young women ages 16 to 24 using tanning equipment. For this reason, many jurisdictions in North America and across the world have implemented regulatory controls on indoor tanning by minors. These include bans, the requirement of parental consent forms, restrictions on advertising, mandatory health warnings and signage, and restrictions on frequency of use.

In the US, Texas enacted the strictest law in the nation, banning children under age 16 from indoor tanning and requiring in-person parental consent for everyone under 18.

Delaware prohibits those under 14 from tanning facilities unless they have a doctor's prescription, and requires those under 18 to have a parent or guardian sign a consent form in the presence of a tanning facility operator.

In Canada, six provinces have followed suit or are in the process of it. It's a shame that we're not, as Ontario, leading the way, but at least we are moving forward very quickly now, Speaker.

As well, Canada's prominent health organizations, such as the Canadian Paediatric Society, are taking strong positions against artificial tanning. I quote Dr. Richard Stanwick, their president: "This is a serious cancer risk, and children and adolescents are not fully aware of the risks they are taking when they step into a tanning bed.... The intensity of rays from tanning beds is 10 to 15 times

stronger than the noon sun. This means that people who spend 10 minutes in a tanning bed walk away with exposure similar to a full day at a beach or lake.... Damage to the skin is cumulative. So the earlier you start tanning, the more you are exposed to cancer-causing ultraviolet rays and the greater your risk for skin cancer."

The Canadian Dermatology Association's Dr. Cheryl Rosen, their national director, said, "The Canadian Dermatology Association strongly encourages governments at all levels to pass legislation regulating the use of artificial tanning equipment, and particularly to prohibit those under 18 from such exposure, which is proven to be carcinogenic to humans.... It is important to increase public awareness of the dangers of exposure to UV radiation from artificial tanning."

The Canadian Cancer Society's Aaron Levo, director of public issues: "The Canadian Cancer Society is concerned about the very real threat to public health posed by indoor tanning.... We support the call for more strongly worded and prominent labelling on tanning beds."

Health Canada itself has said that "no one under the age of 18 should use a tanning bed."

Health units have passed resolutions in support of the same, including North Bay, Parry Sound, Middlesex-London, Niagara region, Toronto and Hamilton, while others, such as the Grey Bruce Health Unit in my riding, continue to raise awareness about the dangers of artificial tanning. I'd like to give kudos to our medical officer of health, Dr. Hazel Lynn, who really continues to push for anti-smoking legislation wherever she can in our riding.

Take it from the experts: They now see people in their 30s who have skin cancer because they started using tanning beds in their teens. While their tan is now long gone, the damage on their skin is still there.

Tanning is risky. It offers no real advantage other than maybe a few people thinking they look better and the peer pressure that goes with it. We just need to find other ways to do that, Speaker. It isn't safe for them, and they need to be aware of what really can happen.

If they could have stood beside my sister's hospital bed as I watched the final hours of her life and saw the pain and suffering that not only she went through, but her immediate family, her children and her grandchildren—this should be a done deal, Speaker. We need to ensure everybody in this House takes this message outside of here and talks to those young children to ensure that they don't go down that perilous slope where they do things for vanity that in later years will definitely impact them.

Speaker, the general key points of this bill talk about prohibiting the sale of tanning services to youth under 18; requiring tanning bed operators to request identification from anyone who appears under 25; banning advertising and marketing of tanning services targeted at youth under 18; requiring tanning bed operators to post signs about the ban and the health risks associated with the use of tanning beds; setting fines for tanning bed operators who fail to comply with the legislation; and authorizing inspectors to inspect and enforce these requirements.

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Again, my heartfelt and sincere thanks to every person in Ontario—the volunteers, the staff members, those family members who are working out there to try to do what they can to turn this horrible disease of cancer around; to the scientists, to the people who donate money and all the various not-for-profit organizations that run events in support for finding a cure for cancer. We need to do what we can. Today, as legislators, we have the ability to move this through to third reading.

In closing, I would like all members of the House to do their part and to help raise awareness about the dangers of artificial tanning and to continue to support the passage of Bill 30 as quickly as we can.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon on behalf of the residents of Dufferin-Caledon to discuss Bill 30, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, 2013. Bill 30, of course, was introduced last March and has received a lot of debate so far. This bill has now already been through committee and is back today for its third and final reading.

I just want to thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. He was very eloquent in his support of the bill and the need for it. Thank you for that.

Of course, this is a bill that, for some time, all three parties have agreed on and have spoken in support of. We've heard from the Premier quite a bit, actually, about how important this bill is. I'll be the first to admit that this is an important initiative. That's why I've been pleased to support this legislation through first, second and now third reading. Bill 30, the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, is basically about protecting Ontario's youth from the harmful effects of indoor tanning beds.

This is really a response to the increasingly growing scientific evidence that points to the known dangers associated with using tanning beds. Studies have shown that the types of ultraviolet light treatments tanning beds are designed around can be quite detrimental, particularly to youth health. This is one of the reasons that, in 2009, the World Health Organization took the notable step of classifying tanning beds as a known carcinogen. This classification is the highest risk category. Other things classified as known carcinogens are asbestos and tobacco.

Pertaining to youth specifically, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer reports that the risk of skin cancer, particularly melanoma, increases by 75% when tanning beds are used prior to the age of 35.

This is where Bill 30 comes in. It will restrict access to indoor tanning equipment for youth under the age of 18. The 18 age limit is a similar cut-off to other harmful substances like alcohol and tobacco. That is the basis of the bill and what it aims to accomplish.

A noble goal to be sure. However, this bill's journey from first reading to today has been, as we all know, somewhat unique. You see, Speaker, Bill 30 was one of

the bills that the PC caucus proposed to pass in a package of bills that we felt were all of good merit and that we could agree with the government in supporting. So we took the initiative and proposed the passage of these bills. There were eight in total, with Bill 30 being one of them. Our leader, Tim Hudak, and our caucus wholeheartedly agree that if we would agree on these specific bills, then let's pass them. Let's get it done; let's clear the decks and get on with addressing Ontario's tough economic issues. That is how Bill 30, really, got to this point today. The PC caucus stood up and said, "Okay, we're here. We need to focus on the economy. We need to create jobs. So let's get these bills passed, and let's focus on the economy."

I hope you don't take me the wrong way here, Speaker. I don't mean to say that Bill 30 is, in any way, unimportant. What I'm saying is we're not disagreeing on the value, so let's get it done.

We have a problem in Ontario. We need to deal with the economy. We need to deal with overspending. To do that, we obviously need to have time in this chamber to debate other issues. With the issues that we agree on, like Bill 30, let's move on. Let's get them passed. Let's start saving some children's lives and move on to other pressing issues.

We have had a consistent terrible stream of scandals flowing from this government one after another, not the least of which being the government's crass seat-saver program, the actual cost of which we are only finding out today, over two years later. That's because this government refuses to disclose the cost of those political decisions at every single turn, and we must therefore pull in people like the auditor to do their work.

Through it all, the Liberal government pointed to its various pieces of legislation like Bill 30 and claimed that somehow—but challenged them on their blatant disregard for taxpayers' money—we were insensitive to legislative initiatives like this one. Yet here we are discussing Bill 30 during its third reading. The reason we're here is because the opposition said, "Let's clear the decks. Let's get on with it. Let's get this bill and others we can agree on passed and, for goodness' sake, let's focus on the economy." We know the government hasn't focused on the economy at all. We're still waiting to hear their economic plan for Ontario. So we thought, "We'll give you an opportunity. Let's get Bill 30 and others passed, and let's see if they actually have a plan for the economy."

As I said, we have supported Bill 30 all along, from the very beginning. So we know what Bill 30 aims to do, but what does it actually contain? Well, Bill 30 also requires tanning bed operators to request identification from people who appear to be under 25, very similar to the LCBO model. This will, of course, remind us all of the current practice regarding tobacco sales in Ontario, which adhere to very similar standards.

Another measure that is included in Bill 30, which I think would make a difference, is the requirement for tanning bed owners to post signs about the ban as well as the health risks associated with the use of tanning beds.

To make these requirements meaningful, it sets out financial penalties for failing to adhere to these rules. Fines are set at \$5,000 for individuals and \$25,000 for corporations.

Bill 30 also bans the specific advertising and marketing of tanning services or ultraviolet light treatments to youth under 18 and requires that all tanning bed operators provide the local medical officer of health with the name, business address and telephone number where the tanning service is being sold.

I'd like to also briefly mention another aspect of Bill 30 that I was disappointed to see wasn't amended in committee, and that is the fact that Bill 30 does not clearly differentiate between UV tanning and spray tanning. I know that our health critic, the member from Whitby—Oshawa, is confident that that issue can be dealt with in regulation. I think, Speaker, you know my personal feelings about putting too much stuff in regulation so that the public can't participate in the discussion. Having said that, I am hopeful that the regulations will very specifically separate those two items, and as the science catches up, we can ensure that that is included. Therefore, in the Skin Cancer Prevention Act, you would think it would be important to differentiate between those two forms of tanning, since one has been directly linked to increased skin cancer, while the other, at this point anyway, has not.

Furthermore, from an economic perspective, I thought it was important to protect the ability of salons to provide spray tanning to youth under 18, as this would further help prevent the use of UV tanning.

Ultimately, the research is pretty clear that the primary risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to ultraviolet radiation from both sun and UV tanning equipment.

When we have incidences of melanoma rising in Ontario youth and adults aged 15 to 34, I think we should be taking some action to help prevent this, and Bill 30 would certainly do that.

Skin cancer is now the most common cancer in Ontario. It accounts for one third of all cancer diagnoses in the province, and it is my hope that Bill 30 will help to reverse this troubling trend, even if only for a small group of young people.

My party has been clear, Speaker: We support this government bill, although I would like to give credit where credit is due. The member from—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Nickel Belt.

Ms. Sylvia Jones:—Nickel Belt—thank you—France Gélinas has been tireless in her efforts to bring forward this issue, so I want to acknowledge that work, because while it is a government bill, without her involvement, I don't think we would be here today.

So we support this government bill. It's why we proposed getting it through the legislative process and passed into law, and that is why I'm happy to see it pass through committee and come forward for debate today.

Tim Hudak and the PC caucus believe that creating jobs and growing the economy should be the number one priority of government. So now that we have proposed to

get Bill 30 passed, we are eagerly awaiting some semblance of a jobs plan to come from this government, and if they do not have one, we encourage them to take ours.

Thank you, Speaker. I look forward to hearing the continuing debate.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It is a pleasure to stand here at third reading and continue with the debate on the tanning bed ban for teens. It has been awhile, obviously, as was detailed by our member from Nickel Belt, France Gélinas, who has indeed been a tireless advocate to get this ban in place.

I'm not exactly sure what else I can add to the debate. We've had a lot of debate on this bill already, but I would like to bring credit to a few different people besides Madame Gélinas who have really championed this bill. She has been mentioned a couple of different times today, but Kate Neale happens to come from my riding, Prince Edward—Hastings. She's a Belleville girl, and she has been a great face for this bill as well.

Her story is the one that's going to resonate with our young people across the province. I know France Gélinas mentioned that earlier—I won't call her an old person, which she did—definitely, when you have somebody who's as young and beautiful as Kate Neale speaking about the dangers of indoor tanning and really challenging our society out there and the beliefs of our young people that a tan is a good thing—we see it in magazines, and we see it on music videos, television and in movies. There are so many terrible role models out there that I think it's great that Kate Neale has taken Bill 30 to a different level.

Also, Joanne and Florentina from the Canadian Cancer Society have been tireless on this, and a number of people from the Prince Edward—Hastings Canadian Cancer Society unit as well: Kim White, who I met with on a number of occasions. She has appeared on my television show on TVCogeco in the Quinte area, Straight Talk with Todd Smith. You can catch that two or three times a week—high, high ratings for that show. As well, Heather Gray, Jeff Brace, Amy Doyle, Sue Rollins—there is a great team in Prince Edward—Hastings that hasn't just been advocating for Bill 30 but also a number of different initiatives to end cancer in our society.

It is so prevalent, and I think even in the last week here, Madam Speaker, we've had three or four different groups in to talk about how we can end cancer or at least take steps to wipe it out.

I just want to share with you a little bit about Kate Neale. Kate is 22 years old now. While I don't generally read Chatelaine magazine, I realize that it is a popular magazine, and Kate's story was featured earlier this year. While Kate's story is probably well known because she has talked to magazines like Chatelaine and, of course, newspapers like the Toronto Star, the Sun, the Globe and Mail and all of these different newspapers, and she has

appeared on Global Television, CBC and CTV—they've all done stories on this bill—her story has never really been told here in the Legislature. I thought that in *Chatelaine* magazine, they did a very good job in getting her story out there in an interview with Kate. If you can bear with me, I think it would be informative for everybody to hear Kate's story first-hand.

It goes like this: "In the summer of 2008, Kate Neale graduated from high school in Belleville, Ontario, and snagged one of the most coveted jobs among her friends: manning the desk at the local tanning salon. 'It felt very glamorous,' she says. 'All of the pretty girls worked there—it was the place to be.' The salon was always fully booked.

"Like many of her friends, Kate idolized reality star Paris Hilton and coveted her sun-kissed look. She'd dyed her long red hair blond and had been going to the salon for tanning sessions a few times a week for two years. Her parents didn't approve (her mom is a nurse), so she'd hitch rides with friends and their parents.

"The first time Kate went to the salon, she was advised to start at seven minutes. Knowing she'd burn easily, she requested five (the lowest amount) instead—and still went home with a burn. Briefly, she considered not going back, but trips to the salon had become a social activity among her friends, and it wasn't long before she returned for another session. 'I got used to it. Then I started going at least three times a week—it was addictive. I'd go whenever I could.'

"In June 2008, the month of her prom, Kate went for 18 sessions for up to 18 minutes at a time in the salon's highest-powered machine (there's a warning on the machine recommending a 12-minute maximum).

"When Kate was hired by the salon, she got 12 free sessions a month. She also agreed to maintain her tan. Soon, Kate was basking under the blue-tinted lamps almost every day. 'My skin wasn't burning anymore, and I'd been taught about all the "healthy" benefits of tanning through the salon,' she says.

"Three years later, Kate's mom noticed a mole near her daughter's belly button. It stood out on her skin and was darker than her freckles. Kate had noticed the mark a few months earlier but ignored it. Her mom pressured her to see a dermatologist, but Kate refused. 'I didn't believe anything was wrong. I insisted that I was trained, I was certified by Smart Tan'—that's a company that certifies salon workers as being knowledgeable about the benefits of tanning—"and I knew what I was doing."

"Still, Kate did a Google search and discovered that the fact the mole was peeling and itchy wasn't good. 'That scared me, but I told myself I was fine and was just being paranoid,' she says. Her aunt knew someone at a dermatologist's practice and got her an appointment about two months later.

"In the exam room, the dermatologist told Kate that although the spot didn't look suspicious, they would still do a 'punch' biopsy, a procedure where part of the spot would be removed and then sent to a lab for analysis. Kate received a stitch after the procedure and thought the

ordeal was over—until two weeks later, when she received a phone call from her dermatologist's office. The mole was cancerous. At 21, Kate had melanoma...."

"Kate was diagnosed with Clark's Level 2 melanoma, which meant the cancer was in the top layers of her skin and not as deep as levels 3 to 5. Within weeks of her diagnosis, she was at a plastic surgeon's office for a more invasive treatment called a wide excision, in which a doctor removed the spot from her stomach as well as six inches of tissue surrounding the freckle. She needed 14 stitches to close the wound. Kate waited, scared and anxious, for two weeks until the lab results came back: The melanoma had not spread to her blood, and the surgeon had been able to remove all of the cancer. Still, the diagnosis changed Kate's life forever. Last year alone, she averaged two doctor's appointments a week, getting her skin checked from head to toe and having an additional 12 biopsies for moles and freckles on her face, breasts, legs, armpits, arms and the sides of her torso (thankfully, they were all non-cancerous). 'It's exhausting, not to mention painful, to have all these biopsies ... But it's a matter of life and death.'

"Having had melanoma once, and because of repeated and prolonged UV exposure from tanning, Kate has a high chance of the disease recurring. 'I have to keep an eye on my body. My oncologist told me I've done a lot of damage to my skin, and because I have so many spots, they could change at any time. I look at my freckles daily and take photos of them.' The worst part of it all, Kate says, is the anxiety. 'There was a spot on my back recently that was itchy for a while, so I had it removed.'

"Reflecting on her original diagnosis, Kate says she isn't angry at the salon, she's angry at the whole tanning industry. 'I felt betrayed. And I had encouraged so many other people to tan.' For a few months after her diagnosis and surgeries, Kate felt sorry for herself. Then she decided to do something about it. 'I thought, "Feeling bad isn't going to do anything for me. There are a lot of people, a lot of my friends, who tan. My story needs to get out there.'"

"Kate has made it her mission to educate young people about the risks of tanning. Just over a year ago, she became a volunteer for the Canadian Cancer Society—and joined our NDP MPP France Gélinas for a press conference here at Queen's Park.

"Last summer, Kate toured schools across Ontario, telling students about the risks of tanning and pleading with them to go tan-free for prom. 'I hope tanning beds are banned in Canada in my lifetime. But it has to happen in baby steps, like the laws around smoking—unfortunately we can't just ban it all at once,' she says.

"Her efforts have already paid off. In Oakville and Belleville, Ontario, bylaws were recently passed prohibiting anyone under the age of 18 from using tanning beds." In Belleville, she had 50 doctors sign letters supporting the bylaw and didn't have to convince anyone saying that it was a no-brainer. At one school in Toronto last year, she actually forgot her presentation and was sure that none of the students were paying attention

to her speech that she was giving that day. She thought it was awful, but that was the presentation where she had the most people come up to her right after, thank her and sign a tan-free pledge.

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She is continuing to speak at schools, advocating for tan-free proms. She says it's challenging to get through, because she knows that when she was a teenager she may not have listened either, but she's honest with the students, shows them her scars and doesn't sugar-coat anything, and that makes them listen. She says that even if one person stops tanning and saves their life, then she's happy with that. Kate Neale has been a great ambassador for the Canadian Cancer Society in getting the message out there that this is the right thing to do.

As Conservatives we always hate to ban anything, but in this case, when the evidence is clearly there—it became clear in 2009, when the World Health Organization declared that indoor tanning had the same negative effect on our bodies as asbestos and smoking, that it was carcinogenic—it was time to bring in a ban, particularly for our young people. It is our duty to ensure that our young people are very safe.

We've heard all kinds of stats here today. One third of the cancers out there are skin cancers. Melanoma is a deadly disease; it's not something to play with. We've been very careful to make sure that we moved this expeditiously through committee. I will give a little bit of time for my committee colleague Ms. Scott just to talk about how quickly we did get this through committee and make some changes to it, but I would just like to again champion the real champion, as far as I'm concerned, and that's Kate Neale of Belleville and her advocacy for Bill 30.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to the bill that bans tanning beds for youth under 18. I will give special recognition to the member from Nickel Belt, who tenaciously pursued this for many years. If we can say to the people watching, we were all in favour of expeditiously putting it through, as quickly as we could. We made a couple of amendments that I think strengthened the bill, so it was good to hear some feedback.

I want to shout out to the Peterborough chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society. They certainly championed this bill; I met with them several times. The Peterborough County-City Health Unit wrote a letter in support of this also. Even just bringing it up as we do in our communities, the awareness and education that are involved around that are very important. I don't think tanning beds were that accessible when I was less than 18 years of age, if I can say, but we live in a different society now, and sometimes you have to bring in rules and regulations that protect our young people from the dangers that are out there.

The UV tanning ban that we've seen for under 18 is an example that we can make better. Other provinces had

done it; it was time for the province of Ontario to step up to the plate. It was a very good response in committee to the deputations that we did hear and suggestions that we did get. As my colleague the member from Prince Edward-Hastings said, it went through committee with no problems.

The amendments—we all worked together. Some got through, some didn't, but it doesn't matter. The fact is that the bill is here. It's strengthened because of that. We have protection now for young people under 18 years of age in respect to UV tanning, and we've probably educated a lot of parents about the effects and damages of this carcinogen-type event that is occurring.

I just want to say that we stand in support and would like to see the bill get final passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Ms. Matthews has moved third reading of Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments for tanning.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. It will be a five-minute bell.

I have received the following message: "Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the third reading of Bill 30 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, October 9, 2013.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day. The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me to call government order G6. Unfortunately, it should be the Kawartha Lakes Act, but I'm told it's the Great Lakes Protection Act, so there we go.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 3, 2013 on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bradley has moved second reading of Bill 6, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say “nay.”
In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

“Pursuant to standing order 28(h), I request that the vote on the second reading of Bill 6 be deferred until deferred votes on Wednesday, October 9, 2013.”

Second reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day. The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. You’re doing a very good job in the chair this afternoon. To everybody’s delight, I will move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1747.

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 9 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 9 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning.
Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 7, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to get up and start the day with the ongoing scandals coming from the other side. It's important on Bill 105, which is trying to help small business—one more example of a government that is basically out of control.

Some \$1 billion—this is what the auditor said. This is the report. I encourage the viewer to have a look at it.

Bill 105 is really talking about tax policy—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Weaving in and out is one thing, but let's stay focused specifically on the bill and avoid any other discussion, as this is the tradition of the House.

Mr. John O'Toole: Bill 105, of course, is a finance bill, technically, and it's providing some sort of relief for small business.

But, really, I'm looking at the input costs in businesses themselves, and we know full well this employer health tax relief was brought forward by our leader, Tim Hudak. I can tell you that that relief is only a small part of what's needed to fix Ontario—the jobs and the economy.

With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I will link it to the scandalous increase in the cost of electricity. They have completely mismanaged that file, which is one of the significant input costs for all business.

We know that in northern Ontario, the pulp and paper industry—about 45% of their input costs are related to the price of energy. So Bill 105 is the first of many steps that are needed to take the foot off the neck of small business—small and large business. Let's not discriminate. We need to have more jobs in the economy.

This bill—let's be honest. Our significant decision was to eliminate it, this employer health tax. That significant decision has been delayed because of—I think as part of the budget process. The NDP got to them on a couple of things; bringing the Financial Accountability Office in, for example. This false suggestion in the budget that they were going to get a 15% cut in auto insurance, which is not going to happen—if you're going to pay less, you're going to get less. You're going to end up paying more for lawyers than you would have saved in the \$300 or \$400, if you were to have a claim.

Bill 105, in my view, does not get close to what's required in the economy today. Even if you look at it, the province itself is in a situation now where they have a significant revenue problem. So raising the ceiling by another half a million dollars, or whatever it is, that you don't have to pay the employer health tax on—they're capping it on the other end, because once your payroll gets to the level of, I think, \$5 million, then you aren't entitled to this relief in employer health tax. That's basically all that's in Bill 105.

I suspect there are other speakers who will bring other points of view to it, but I'd like to look at a whole range of tools in the tool box that the Premier—her famous term she's using nowadays. But I still go back to the auditor, and his report has to be repeated because it's in that context that you find out how much trouble we're in.

Which is the biggest part of the budget in Ontario? The biggest part of the budget, of course, is health care. It's probably about 40-some percent of the budget. But there was an article in the Toronto Star the other day—this is related; this is employer health tax, Bill 105. This article in the Toronto Star, entitled “Fundraisers an Increasing Necessity for Sick Ontarians,” goes on to say that a woman who had a stroke was sort of taken out of the hospital, and the option was that she could stay for \$1,700 a month but get no treatment. This article, “Fundraisers an Increasing Necessity for Sick Ontarians,” is from the October 3 Toronto Star. This person and her family were spending—mortgaging their house to get therapy for a stroke victim.

I have one in my riding, a fellow by the name of Jim McEwan, an engineer who at about 50 years of age had a stroke. He was a significant partner in an engineering firm, and now he's spending his lifetime savings to receive therapy as a stroke victim. He's a very intelligent man.

This is what has happened to Ontario. Now, this employer health tax, Bill 105, they're suggesting—if you go back to the way this thing started, it was implemented as

part of the original budget in, I believe, 2003-04. That was another tax tool. They've now increased almost all the taxes on business itself. When I say that, I'm saying that if you look at the WSIB rates and the College of Trades, these are all basically taxes on jobs; there's no getting around it. I know that the last time I was speaking on Bill 105, I wasn't really allowed to get into some of this stuff, health care being the biggest one in the budget.

Another article, this again is in the *Toronto Star*: Ornge, the air ambulance business, plans an overhaul of how to bid and improve its service. A review that went on—an independent report—says, “The review examined 40 cases where a patient died and found eight cases where Ornge operational issues had some impact on the outcome.” That means a medical system that's failed.

We're talking about Bill 105, which is a modest little manipulation of taxes for very small business, but in fact it just shifts that tax to someone else. There's no tax cut here for anyone.

If you don't think that paying an electricity bill isn't a tax, then you don't know how it works. Electricity is a tax, because it's non-discretionary consumption. What has happened to electricity in this province? The cost of electricity has doubled.

Now, that cost in Bill 105 does talk about the budget, and in that respect I'm relating elements that are not specifically in Bill 105, because Bill 105 only does one thing: It allows businesses with a payroll under \$5 million not to pay as much in employer health tax, but it's going to shift it to another class. So if you have a payroll of \$5,000,001, you're going to be paying more. That's what it is, because revenue in Ontario is the problem.

Expenditures are the bigger problem. They're spending more than they're earning, and that's really what the auditor is saying in all his reviews. Today I think they're reviewing long-term care in the public accounts committee, another failed delivery in health care.

0910

Does this relate to Bill 105? Every time you talk about the budget, you've got to talk about what the budget, the money, is being used for. I think we've made the point that health care is the largest one. The third-largest expenditure—the viewers should know this—is the interest on the debt. The interest on the debt is something in the order of \$11 billion.

So I see a government in trouble. The auditor's report yesterday with the billion dollars on the gas plants is just one more recent example.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The opposition can speak in their two-minute responses, and I'd be pleased to see them explain it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: While I agree with the member from Durham, in part, that this is not a revolutionary bill, it is nonetheless a good one, and we support it because it makes a correction that I think is appropriate.

Currently, there's an exemption for paying the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 in an employer's payroll, and this applies to a small business, but it also applies to big businesses. We argue that giving a break to big businesses where they are doing just fine was something that wasn't necessary, but giving a break to a small business owner was a very useful thing and a good thing because we know and we realize that a whole lot of smaller companies are creating a whole lot of good jobs, and we need to support them.

But to give a break to a bank or many banks that are doing just fine in our economy just doesn't make any sense. So we argued with the Liberals that we should support small business but let the big businesses survive on their own. They're doing just fine without the support of our government and the support of our citizens in this particular example. We argued that while this exemption is appropriate for small companies, there is no reason to have the first \$400,000 of a large employer's payroll exempted from the employer health tax.

Therefore, one of the budget demands that we made was to have companies with \$5 million in payroll or more no longer be eligible for that exemption, and that is included in this legislation. We think that is okay, and that is why many of us will be supporting Bill 105.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions or comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to stand today to speak in support of Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

I was very disappointed when the member from Durham did not focus on the debate today, did not focus on Bill 105. But more importantly, he is noticeably forgetful of what this bill is all about: supporting small businesses and the fact that this proposed legislation, if passed, will help more than 60,000 small businesses in Ontario, including roughly about 12,000 businesses that will no longer have to pay this employer health tax. Again, I want to remind the member from Durham that your party is supporting small businesses, and selectively you forgot what is fuelling the engine of this province: the small businesses. This is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

The other thing here, and it is part of our government's commitment through our 2013 budget, is to ask for a reforming of the employer health tax—again, targeting, helping and supporting small business across Ontario. As part of the reform, we are also attracting more businesses into Ontario, making it a place to work, a place to have a business—but more importantly, to attract growth in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we are all here for one reason: one Ontario, to make sure businesses stay. More importantly, each one of us, all 107 of us, have a role and a responsibility to attract businesses, good businesses to Ontario. I think every one of us in this House has a responsibility to support bills that attract business to our economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments? The member from Huron-Bruce has the floor.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's great to see you in the chair. It's going to be an interesting morning.

With that, I want to commend my colleague the member from Durham, because he is spot-on when he talks about what really matters for small business. Time after time after time, we're seeing this Liberal government try and pull the wool over people's eyes and tinker around the edges. When we look at this bill, for goodness' sake—this is the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It's, again, just tinkering around the edges.

I thought the other day, when we were addressing this very issue, my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke hit the nail right on the head when he said, "My goodness. All this government does is really take from Paul, and because they've dug so many deep holes, they can't even give it over to Peter." They have so many issues which all culminate today in the headlines, because the truth is finally out there.

This Liberal government has mismanaged for years and years, and finally enough is enough when yesterday the Auditor General outed this Liberal government for their absolute disregard for the Ontario taxpayer by relocating gas plants at a cost of \$1.1 billion. It is absolutely abysmal. That's why, when we have very thin bills like Bill 105 that just tinker around the edges, it's unacceptable.

People go to the polls and they select people to represent them in this beautiful chamber because they think they're going to make a difference. But unfortunately, time and time again, scandal after scandal, this Liberal government has proven they do not deserve the support of the Ontario taxpayer any longer, and we need to do more for small business as a result.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently, as I always do, to my good friend from Durham. He speaks in such a way—it's just a rolling thought pattern, going from issue to issue to issue, but always staying around the area of what is being discussed. I commend him for saying that this is a very small and tiny issue.

I think the member from Huron–Bruce, in her comment, also hit the nail pretty much on the head: this is tinkering around the edges. But we, as New Democrats, are proud of this little tinker. It was part of those things that we insisted on being in the budget if we were going to support it last spring. It's important for small business, and it is important, in fact, for the economy and for the government as a whole to take away this largesse from big companies that didn't necessarily need the money or deserve the money.

I'm very happy that the government has come forward with this bill, but I will have a chance in my hour to speak about what the government should have really done if they were, in fact, looking for additional revenues to wipe out an abysmal deficit that's rising and continuing at around \$9.5 billion this year. I think that's something that needs to be addressed far more than this tinkering around the edges, which is, in fact, revenue-neutral.

But I commend the member from Durham for what he had to say, because we need some real, healthy debate on this. We just can't stand up and say this is a good thing that the government has done, because it is minimalist, as most of the things that are done here are minimalist.

What we need to do, I think, is to take some real, good action on the economy, and I commend my friend from Durham for talking about the actions his party would take. They might not necessarily be the actions that I would take, but we cannot any longer accept simply minimalist intervention.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham has two minutes.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Scarborough–Agincourt, Huron–Bruce and Beaches–East York.

Really, in fairness, to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, I believe that I did speak quite passionately about small business. I think of the farms in my community, which are small business, and I think of the businesses that are mom-and-pop. The people next door to my constituency office are new to Canada, but they're the hardest-working people, day and night, running a small convenience store.

I really am concerned, though, that this bill itself—the people have to realize, too, that it is a tax, and it's a minimalist response to it. If you look at it, the exemptions are provided there. The payroll is—I don't know why they put that in. Either it's a tax or not.

Now, big business doesn't get any reward on this. In fact, they're going to pay more, because the revenue has to come from somewhere. The tax tools that they're talking about for transit—they're talking about increasing consumption tax, which is the HST. It's now 13%. I'm forecasting now, today, it will probably go to 15%. It's a nice, round number.

0920

The Liberals don't look at making efficiency changes. They look at getting more money. Their problem isn't "tax and spend"; it's "spend and tax," because they're always behind. They're in deficit almost since they got elected. It's tragic.

I think the member from Scarborough–Agincourt—I've met a young constituent of hers, Liang Chen.

Interjection: A great lady.

Mr. John O'Toole: She's a great lady. She has a PhD in finance. She would be pro-small business; you can guarantee that. I'd do anything to see a person like her in this chamber someday—really. I put that out there because Liang Chen, to me, is a name that the table Clerks and Hansard should get the spelling correct for, because she'll be here shortly.

Potentially, others will speak today on this bill, and I'm going to be here to listen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Not too diverse on that side. All white men and white women.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister is a little bit out of line there. I think the minister will retract her last comment about the people who are here.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I retract.

Mr. John Yakabuski: She has to actually stand—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): She did stand, and I'll take care of it. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: This is my leadoff. I have up to an hour. I'm not sure that I'm going to take the whole hour.

This is a relatively simple bill, but it needs to be discussed in terms of where it fits in the overall economic patterns of this government and what we could and should be doing in order to revive the economy of this province and pay down our deficit.

First of all, I'd like to give a shout-out to small business in Ontario, particularly the small businesses in my riding. What has been said many times by every single party over the course of my time here in the Legislature is that the backbone of our economy are those small business people who operate, sometimes on a shoestring, but who are the real engine of our economy, the ones who move it forward. When big businesses started to fail in the depression, it was the small businesses that brought things forward and kept things on a pretty even keel.

In Beaches—East York, we have a number of groups that I think are doing a really terrific job, and I'd just like to name them and talk about them for a second, before I get into the meat of the bill.

We have BIAs, business improvement areas, along Queen Street and the Beach. We have a very nascent one on Coxwell Avenue; we have one on Kingston Road. They're trying to develop others along the Danforth, and in fact there is one along the Danforth as well. They do a terrific job in motivating small businesses, in keeping our storefronts alive, in inviting new restaurants—the community to get involved, to shop locally. They do that kind of job not only for themselves, but the benefits to our community are enormous.

When the storefronts were closing on certain portions of Danforth Avenue, close to where my constituency office is, the local business association and the neighbours came forward with pop-up stores. People go into the stores. The owner of the stores lets the people come in, clean them up—they don't pay any rent—and start a new enterprise. As a result of those enterprises, those pop-up stores on the Danforth—some of them have been successful, so that after a couple of months they start paying rent, and the store is open and you don't have sort of the blight, the urban blight, of empty stores along main streets. They've done a terrific job.

The BIA on Queen Street, on what I think is also a shoestring budget, is making major improvements with the street furniture and with the flowers, and making it inviting to walk along the street, to go into the restaurants and the small stores, to shop locally, to not have to get in the car or even on the subway to do your shopping but do it right at home.

Some of those monies, in fact, are coming back into the community, so we're seeing community festivals as a result. You don't see that with great, big, big-box retail—donating the same way to local neighbourhoods. You don't see the same thing with giant corporations, for all that they might give to charity. It's not local and it doesn't come right back to the community.

Everything that we can do in the NDP to help small business, we want to do it. That's why we are going to support this bill, even though the bill does not accomplish all of what we wanted to accomplish when we put it forward to the government as one of the demands leading up to the budget. Now, what does the bill do?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We have a mini caucus meeting going on over there. Maybe the member who is entertaining, from Agincourt, would like to take the meeting outside.

Ms. Soo Wong: I didn't say anything.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, you did. You were talking.

Continue.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I really don't care what you're talking about. You want to go outside with it. Go.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for attempting to try to bring some order here. It is often difficult to make a speech, particularly a technical speech as this one is going to be, with so many people nattering on—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, we have a little comedy act going over here.

You stand up when the member is speaking. Did you want a point of order?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I was just—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, then I suggest you keep it cut back. Thanks.

Continue.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you. As I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted by the member from Renfrew—with people nattering on and saying things and not listening. The important thing about this chamber, and we ought never to forget it, is that this is a place where we have debate, where we look at the ideas that other people are saying. If you don't want to listen to the debate, I suggest it's pretty easy not to be here. It's pretty easy just to ignore it and do whatever you're doing or quietly read your BlackBerry, which you're not supposed to have in here either. But the words have to be spoken, and I would hope that they would be listened to.

Mr. Speaker, what we put forward is not exactly what's contained within the body of the bill. I would like to outline the major and fundamental difference. What is here is that there will be an exemption for the first \$450,000 of an employer's payroll for small businesses of under \$5 million. What we had proposed in the lead-up to the budget debate was to leave it at \$400,000, not

\$450,000, and to abolish it for larger corporations that really didn't need the money. That would have produced revenues of some \$90 million for the treasury of Ontario.

It was part of an economic package that we put forward, because New Democrats do not believe that we can or should sustain deficits of the magnitude of what has been the norm here for the last number of years. We need to get out of a deficit situation, and we need to do one of two things. There are only two things that can be done. The first is that you have to increase your revenues; the second is that you have to reduce your expenditures. Reducing expenditures, many times, are very hurtful to people within the economy and can cause some serious repercussions to the economy itself. So we are very mindful of reducing expenditures, and they have to be surgically done; they just can't be across the board, as some would suggest. But increasing revenues can also be done surgically and selectively. One of the ways we thought that \$90 million could have been made was precisely by leaving it at \$400,000.

But having said that, I understand that this is a boon to some small businesses. It's going to be an amount of money that they're going to be able to keep, and we are very happy, if one group is going to benefit out of this, that it has been targeted to those small businesses that are less than \$5 million a year.

We are also happy with another small thing that is contained within the body of this bill. That is, the government has also moved to close the loopholes that allowed employers to segment their workforce. People out there may or may not understand this, but it is a practice of some companies to break themselves up for the purpose of income tax. You would have a company that would have, say, \$10 million or \$15 million in total revenues for the year that might not be eligible for the employer health tax. But what they do is they carve their company up into parts A, B, C and D so that each one of them only has, say, maybe \$4 million in total revenues. Then they get additional funds from the government and they are eligible for extra things like relief from the employer health tax. We think the government needs to be very aggressive. A company that is a company ought not to be able to claim they are four companies simply by filing something for a couple of dollars with the Ontario government stating that they are something which, in fact, they are not.

0930

So we are asking the government to move aggressively on this. It's not contained within the bill itself, but it will be left up to regulation. But the government has to be very aggressive because there will be companies out there that see this employer health tax and see the revenue tool that they may be able to get at \$450,000, and decide that they're just—you know, "Let's cut our company in half" or a quarter or three quarters or whatever number they're going to choose in order to be eligible for it, and a great many other things.

So those are the two issues here. We are a little disappointed that there isn't revenue here for the govern-

ment, but if it has to go to somebody, please let it be the small business. We are also very mindful that the government needs to be far more aggressive than it has been in the past to close off all possible ways of segmenting the workforce for payroll reporting purposes. Because, to date, that has not been done.

Now, we have larger concerns. I'd like to deal with some of those as they're related to this bill because, as I said, New Democrats think the bill is a good bill. It wasn't 100% our idea, but it was mostly our idea, and so we want to take some credit for where we were coming from. We were looking for it as a revenue tool; you were looking for it as a way to help small business, and, in the end, I guess both ideas have their merits.

But there are larger concerns that we have. There are other tax loopholes out there that the government is not considering or the government ignores or the government thinks are perfectly all right, which New Democrats cannot and will not accept.

Let's start with some of those. The Liberals claim that the provincial government needs to hit household budgets with new taxes to raise \$34 billion for transit infrastructure by 2031. Do we need new transit in this province? Absolutely we need transit. If you live in Toronto, as I do, I will tell you, as you try to manoeuvre through Toronto, whether you're on the TTC, whether you're driving your car, whether you're on a bicycle, the gridlock is enormous. With construction season upon us, it's even worse making your way to Queen's Park on days like this. A trip for me, if I'm in the car, which would normally be—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: In the car?

Mr. Michael Prue: Sometimes I'm in the car because I have things to do after work at night. You have to understand the nature of our job. And you know too the nature of our job is not necessarily just to be here, but the nature of our job is to go out from this place, from time to time, as I did on Monday, down to Niagara, much to the chagrin of the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. But I also have to have the car because tonight I have functions after work in my riding, and I need the car to get there.

But as I came down this morning, the gridlock was oppressive at 7:30 in the morning. I could not believe, with the construction in the downtown core, how long it took me to get to this place. If I was on the TTC, which I often am as well—when I don't have functions at night or places I have to be during the day, I take the TTC—I actually enjoy it; I get an opportunity to read documentation and newspapers and things that I don't have a chance to do otherwise. It's a very pleasant, for me, 45 minutes to an hour to come down on the TTC. It's a half-hour by car, but the TTC is my preferred way whenever I have an opportunity to do it.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Don't forget, Michael, we don't have clean buses on Dufferin.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, no, I know—the clean buses on Dufferin. I'd like to give a shout-out to my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence, who always raises this issue.

Perhaps he would be mindful of the number of buses—I think we said so yesterday—2,000-something buses that could have been bought had we not spent a billion dollars in other ways. That would have put a clean bus on every single street in Toronto for that price. So you have to know what you want and you have to be prepared to do it. You can either shut down a gas plant in Oakville or you can have a clean bus on Dufferin. I would think my friend from Eglinton–Lawrence would have chosen the latter, and maybe should have been more vocal at the time for his clean buses instead of Oakville.

Mr. Mike Colle: Always have been.

Mr. Michael Prue: Always have been—and I agree with him, but I digress, Mr. Speaker, I digress.

This is what the government is saying: They need \$34 billion. Do we need the infrastructure? Do we need the TTC? Do we need buses and GO trains, infrastructure and bridges and things all across this province? Of course we do. Do we need the \$34 billion to do it? Of course we do. Do we need the \$34 billion to do it? Of course we do. But the question is, where does it come from? The government is saying, as I understand their argument, that ordinary taxpayers are going to have to pony up this \$34 billion.

I am reminded of a little meeting in my office some time ago with some business groups. They were coming forward to me to say, “We need infrastructure. We need infrastructure across Ontario. We particularly need infrastructure and money for subways and things in Toronto.” They were asking me to support the earliest machinations of the Premier to find \$34 billion from general revenues from taxation. They were looking at a whole bunch of things that were all going to hit ordinary people and small business.

I had to remind them—I said, “Look, meet me halfway. You, as a big business group—you meet me halfway. You come up with \$17 billion that big business is going to pay, and I will start to make the arguments for you about the \$17 billion that citizens will pay, because we all use the roads. We all use the infrastructure.”

I pointed right out my window, as they were watching, to University Avenue. More than half the vehicles on University Avenue, as I pointed out to them, were trucks, taxicabs, delivery vehicles and other things that were business-operated. They weren’t people in their cars. I said, “Businesses use the roads half as much as people use it for transportation and transit. Therefore, I think that business should be made to pay half the amount.” You can understand that that idea was not broadly accepted around the table by anyone except me, because the big business that was there didn’t want to pay anything. We, as New Democrats, say that everything has to be fair.

I want to get to that next point. At the same time, the Liberal government has committed to a series of new corporate tax loopholes and giveaways to Ontario’s largest corporations and highest-income earners that will cost the Ontario treasury over \$35 billion by 2031.

So there you have the choice: the corporate tax giveaways, the tax loopholes for those who earn huge amounts

of money compared to the rest of us, and the amount of money, the \$1 billion, between the two. You’re asking ordinary people to fork over \$34 billion, but you’re letting \$35 billion slip between your fingers from corporations and the very rich. Does this make any economic sense? Does this make any sense at all?

When we talk about this very small amount that’s revenue-neutral in this bill, we also have to look at what the government is doing, or not doing, to meet the needs of Ontario. If you’re going to give away \$35 billion, and you’re going to tax ordinary people \$34 billion, then I think there’s something wrong and I would think there is likely to be a revolution over such actions.

Just to be clear where this money you are giving away is in reality coming from: Beginning in 2015, the government will open a \$1-billion corporate tax loophole that will give Ontario’s largest corporations an HST rebate on expenses like high-priced restaurants and box seats. The annual cost is \$1.3 billion a year, and the cumulative cost by 2031 is \$18.85 billion. Now, just so everybody knows about that bill—I mean, everybody knows what that involves.

The most egregious part, of course, is that big corporations go to fancy restaurants and down to the Air Canada Centre, down to the Rogers Centre, take their corporate clients out for a night of shows and wining and dining and everything else and don’t pay any HST.

I know that when I go out to a restaurant, I pay the HST. Everybody in this room pays the HST. When I go down to watch a Leafs game, which I only do sparingly because the tickets are so exorbitant, do I pay the HST? Yes, I pay the HST. Why don’t the corporations have to pay the HST? When I go down and watch the basketball game—and I haven’t been to one now, I must admit, for the last year or so—I pay the HST. Why don’t the corporations pay the HST? When I go to the show and see a production, I pay the HST. Why don’t the corporations pay the HST?

0940

The Liberals have said this is not an issue. We think it is an issue. It’s a \$1.3-billion issue. If you close that loophole, will some of the corporations not take their clients out and wine and dine them and do all those things? Maybe some will. Will there be a slight reduction? Maybe there will in the number of expenses that are actually out there in the economy. But will it hurt the restaurants and Maple Leaf entertainment? I don’t think so at all. I don’t think one whit will it hurt, because the corporations have that kind of money, and they don’t need a tax loophole to do it.

The second thing: Beginning in 2018, there are planned corporate tax cuts from 11.5% to 10%. It will cost the treasury about \$800 million a year. This is according to the Globe and Mail, April 24, 2012. That’s what is anticipated: \$800 million, or \$0.8 billion a year, or \$10.4 billion by 2031. And that’s because the government has said all of these cuts will resume as soon as we come back into a non-deficit position. The government has said we’re going to be out of deficit by 2017, so in

2018 and beyond, we are going to start reducing the amounts of money that corporations pay to the point of some \$800 million a year. Can we afford this? Can this be afforded when we have been running a deficit for so long, when we have debts that are starting to cripple this economy, this government and this province? We should be very mindful of simply giving away money to corporations that make a lot of money. I want to help those that are in some kind of trouble, and we have programs for that, but just to give it away is bizarre.

I don't want to pick on the banks. The banks are there to make money, and the banks make money. I look at the quarterly reports; they make \$1.3 billion, \$1.5 billion, \$1.8 billion a quarter. Each one of the Big Five sisters makes that every quarter in profit. I have to ask myself, do we need to subsidize them? No. Do we need to impede them and hinder them and treat them nasty? No, we don't need to do that either. But why do we give tax money to them? Why do we give all of this money away that we so desperately need?

We have in this province many poor people. We have in this province families that live hand to mouth. We haven't increased near enough the amount of money that children who have the misfortune to grow up in families with a parent or parents on ODSP—we haven't given them near enough money, and they go to school hungry. Why do we need to allow that and, at the same time, feel that somehow in 2018 we're going to give additional corporate tax cuts of nearly a billion dollars to those companies that don't need it?

Beginning in 2018, there is also a planned tax cut for individuals earning over \$500,000 per year. That's going to cost the treasury of Ontario about \$470 million a year, or approximately \$6,110,000,000 cumulative by 2031. When the NDP—not this last budget, but the budget before—put as a condition that there would be a new income tax for those who earn above \$500,000, at first the Liberals shied away from it. At first, they said no and thought it was a terrible idea, until editorial opinion and research showed that 85% or 90% of all Ontarians thought it was a good idea. The Liberals then backtracked and put it into the budget, but they also put the caveat that that would end as soon as we got out of deficit position. Can we afford that? I don't think so.

If you look at what is happening in the United States, what Obama is trying to do as the President of the United States around that very issue—and Warren Buffett, one of his chief spokespeople, one of the richest men in the world, says it's categorically unfair that he pays a lower income tax rate in that country than his secretary does.

We are saying to the government that you cannot afford it if you have plans of building subways, if you have plans of new roads and bridges in rural Ontario, if you have plans of putting GO trains down to Niagara. If you have any plans at all for making Ontario a better place than it is already, you cannot forgo that money. We are telling you that it's not contained within the body of this bill. Maybe this is the first of many bills, but we want to point you in the direction you need to go.

Now, the cumulative total of those things alone—those three ideas alone—is \$2.57 billion a year or, over the life of the cumulative cost, by 2031 \$35.36 billion. That could pay for every single idea for transit, for transportation that the Premier has enunciated. That could pay every single dime, in and of itself. Will the government do it? I don't know. Would the NDP do it? I also don't know. There is a role for ordinary people to pay something, too, because they are going to benefit, in terms of helping to ease gridlock. I'm not going to say “end gridlock,” because Toronto is of such size and such sprawl that I don't know whether it can ever be ended, but it certainly can be eased. I have, and we all have, a duty to pay for some of that.

But start looking to where that money is, start looking to the deficits we have been running, and start looking to the debt that we are accumulating. Start looking at all of these things when you come up with economic bills. If we make the ITC permanently delayed—they've been delayed for a couple of years—but if we permanently delay them, as I said, this is going to be \$1.3 billion annually, and it should be done. We should consider it low-hanging fruit. It is one of the easiest possible things we can do.

I'd like to talk about some other things that we could do. Don Drummond said—and let's use the Drummond report for a few minutes—where we needed to find some additional revenues. Now, he was very light on finding additional revenues; he was very heavy on all the things that we could cut. But let's look at what he said about additional revenues. He estimated that we could get \$50 million in year one and \$200 million by 2017-18 by increasing corporate tax compliance. Those are big words, but literally having the tax department—which we gave away to Ottawa and which now works in Ottawa and not for the province of Ontario. The people we used to have work here and look after Ontario's interests now look after Canada's interests, with Ontario secondary—in my view anyway. But we made that corporate decision, and I voted against it and still think it was wrong-headed idea. They're in Ottawa now. But if we asked the federal government to be part of this, of getting corporate tax compliance so that people can't run around the tax system, we could get a minimum, according to Drummond, of \$50 million to \$200 million a year.

The federal government, to its credit—and I don't often have very nice things to say about the Harper government in Ottawa—in the last budget closed some of those loopholes federally. If you look at what was done, you have to think it's a good thing.

I was watching the CBC the night before last, and they showed tax loopholes and how Canadian companies located in Ontario primarily, but Canadian companies as a whole, picked Barbados, of all places, as the place to invest. They use the tax loopholes to set up sham and dummy corporations in Barbados, and the amount of money that is flowing between Canada and Barbados is phenomenal. It showed some of the income tax experts in Canada, caught on tape, telling people how to avoid paying income taxes and their fair share of corporate taxes in

Canada. It showed, as well, people in Barbados, lawyers and accountants in Barbados, bringing people from Canada to avoid compliance and to invest in Barbados. In fact, at the end of the television documentary show, at the end of the national news, it showed that Barbados, after the United States and Canada, was the third-biggest place in the world in which Canadians were now investing their money. A little, tiny place with less than a million in population was the third place in the world.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's 280,000.

0950

Mr. Michael Prue: My colleague here—280,000 people, he's saying. You may be right. I know it's less than a million.

There is the third place in the world that money is flowing into from Canada. We need to shut those things down. I don't know that Ontario can play the entire role, but we have to have the finance minister dealing with the finance ministers of the other provinces and with the federal government to cut those kinds of things down, because that is money that is literally bleeding from Ontario, literally bleeding from the people of Canada.

They make all their money here, but they don't want to reinvest back into the people who helped them make that money. They get all the roads; they get all the education; they get all the infrastructure that this wonderful province and this wonderful country can provide, and they don't want to pay taxes on it.

I am sorry; we as New Democrats cannot countenance that. We will not accept that. We ask the government to start being more serious on this very point. It's all well and good to help small business—and I'm back to that again—in this very small way that will help some of them with \$1,000 or \$2,000 a year, and I'm thankful for that and I'm sure they are too. But we have to start looking at the big players, and we have to start looking at those players that don't want to play by the rules, because the rules should apply to everyone.

I don't know of anyone who works in a factory, I don't know of anyone who works in an office, I don't know any schoolteachers, and I don't know even any politicians in this room who try to funnel their money offshore for tax avoidance or who put it into another province for tax avoidance. It isn't done by ordinary people. It's done by those who have the wherewithal, the financial accounting, the lawyers and everyone else to tell them how to do it. We need to end it.

I'd like to just go back, because I don't think I spoke enough about the HST delayed-input tax credits. I did talk about people going down to watch hockey games and going to restaurants and those kinds of things, but there are some other HST exemptions that exist today.

Large businesses, generally those making taxable incomes—including zero-rated supplies—worth more than \$10 million, and banks, trust companies, credit unions, insurers, segregated funds of insurers, and investment plans are thinking that they've got it made. But we believe that the HST tax input should remain permanent, or should be made permanent, because some of the other

things that this does for business, which I have some real problem with, is that a business can have the HST exempt for road vehicles that are less than three tonnes, including all parts, service and fuel.

Now, think about this for a minute. Probably everybody in this chamber has a car. Everybody in this chamber has a car, but not one person in this chamber and not one person that I know of the general public has an HST tax exemption for purchasing a car—anything under three tonnes—nor do they get any HST tax exemption for parts, if something goes wrong with the car, for service on the vehicle, or for the fuel that goes into the vehicle. I wonder: Why do people here want to include and continue that HST exemption? I don't get it. Why should they get it?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Because they create jobs.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, here it is: My Conservative friend says, "Because they create jobs."

Here's the nub of it all: Do they create jobs with that money? If they did, I might say it was okay. But they don't create jobs with that money. Even the federal finance minister, who used to sit here in this very House, has complained bitterly that all of these tax exemptions that have been given are simply pooled and kept in their profits and kept in their corporate pockets and are not creating the kinds of jobs they were intended to do. I have some problem with that; I have some problem.

What we need to do is we have to have—not just giving away the money, as some people in this place would want to do—conditions—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham might want to get in his seat.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Why? You know why.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't hear what that nattering was all about, but I'm sure it was—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Irrelevant.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm sure it was intended to be funny, at least.

The second thing is, I think we have to start questioning, for corporations, on this HST exemption. They are also exempt from energy, from electricity, gas, fuel and steam, except if they're in manufacturing. I find this amazing. I find this amazing that the Liberals have poo-hoed the idea every time we talked about this. They are exempt from energy, electricity, gas, fuel and steam.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: They wrote a letter, though.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, they wrote a letter.

But are people in this chamber exempt? Are teachers or truck drivers or cab drivers or people who work in the grocery store? If they turn on the light, they're not exempt from the HST, I'll tell you. They see that HST on every bill. When they fuel up their car, are they exempt? No, they're not exempt; they pay it on every bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to be a corporation.

Mr. Michael Prue: But if you're a corporation, this government has pooh-poohed the idea that they should have to pay. I think ordinary people think they should.

The telecommunications—we were arguing this just the other day. We had a bill here about telecommunications and some of the rip-offs, but one of the biggest rip-offs is that corporations are exempt for telecommunications except for Internet and toll-free numbers. They don't pay HST. Why do I pay HST? Why do you pay HST? Why does everybody else pay, but they don't pay? They don't pay.

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: I know it's federal, but we need to talk about this. I started off my speech, if the member had been listening, by saying the federal Minister of Finance and the finance ministers from each of the provinces have to sit down and the HST exemption has to be taken away. This is not something that can be done unilaterally, but this is something that needs to have the guts—and not just pooh-poohing the thing. This has to be a concerted effort by the government and, indeed, from all sides of this House. That's why I'm talking about it today.

I've already talked about the meals and entertainment.

This restriction is going to be gradually eliminated. Right now it's 100%. They can't claim the HST from July 1, 2010, to June 30, 2015. But starting on July 1, 2015, it's reduced to 75%. Starting on July 1, 2016, it's going to be reduced to 50%—starting on July 1, 2017, to 25%, and on July 1, 2018, to zero. What we are going to see over the next four or five years is a reduction of \$1.3 billion until it's down to zero. I don't think we can afford it, and I don't think it's fair, and I don't think for what it's purported to do it's doing a very good job.

Manufacturing jobs have declined. Many other jobs are in short supply. If there are any jobs being created in this province—and you can ask almost anyone—they are in low-paying, non-manufacturing jobs at minimum wage and are staffed primarily by young people who have no other choice because there's an unemployment rate of 15% or so among the young. I ask the government to think about that.

Don Drummond also pointed out a number of problems with Ontario's tax collection system. He said the greatest challenge to the province relates to the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of provincial corporate income tax through creative mechanisms, including the shifting of profits and losses across Canada and outside of Canada. Again, I refer to the CBC story of a night or two nights ago, and that, to me, pretty much says it all. Don Drummond recognizes that that's a place we should go, and I'm looking forward to the future where the government looks at it as well.

A couple more things—and I'll probably conclude before the hour is up. We need to do some aggressive international tax-planning strategies so that people who earn their profits in Canada, corporations that earn their profits in Ontario, pay taxes in Ontario and pay taxes in Canada. We can no longer afford to have this money shifting around the world.

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Those who are infinitely better at computers than I have been able to uncover some of that tax avoidance. We have seen it. Of course, some of them are chased around the world by those who have a lot of money and who are pushing their respective governments to put them in jail for actually showing how this international money moves around.

So I'm asking not only the finance minister of Ontario, but especially the federal finance minister to meet with finance ministers from other countries. Just as we are suffering in this country—mark my words—people are suffering throughout most of the developed world because of those who would seek to avoid paying their fair share.

The federal government and budget went at least part-way toward curtailing foreign-controlled corporations, with the introduction of the foreign affiliate dumping rules in Bill C-45. New Democrats support this initiative. We want to see much more from the federal government, and we hope that the finance minister will lean that way, as well.

In that regard, there are just a couple of things that need to happen. We need, as a province, to insist that there is additional data review and research to identify activities of concern to this province. Secondly, we need to enter into an agreement with the Canada Revenue Agency to invest resources in additional compliance efforts; that is, finding those companies that are going around the law and making sure that they pay. We need to implement additional reporting requirements that disclose activities that cause income and losses to be allocated to a province where the underlying economic activity was minimal or did not occur. We know that there are corporations who've set up dummy offices or tiny offices in provinces where they have no economic activity in order to evade paying the taxes in Ontario. We need to make sure that that comes to a halt. We also need to ensure that companies that take advantage of loans, grants, writeoffs and other Ontario corporate tax breaks, on the assumption that they will undertake certain activities such as job creation, new plants and machinery, research and development, actually perform those activities in Ontario. We need to do that.

My friend from the Conservative Party shouted out a while ago that they create jobs. Well, if they're creating jobs, they need to create them, and if they're not creating jobs, we shouldn't be giving them money to do so.

Drummond recommended that Ontario collaborate with the federal government and other provinces to investigate options to tax corporations on a consolidated basis, with the purpose of ensuring a fair allocation of losses and income across Canada. I could not agree more.

Mr. Speaker, to wind up—see, I am going to be less than my hour—New Democrats support this bill, but we recognize that it is a relatively minor bill when we have major, major problems. We have problems because there is not enough revenue, and in part I think the government is to blame for this, for wasting revenues, very precious

dollars, that ought not to have been wasted. The Premier said as much yesterday.

It is a shame to waste a billion dollars when there is so much that could be done with it. It is a shame to have wasted a billion dollars on eHealth when so much could have been done with it. It is a shame to have wasted the hundreds of millions of dollars on Ornge when so much could have been done with it.

We need the revenues, but we also need to be mindful of how those monies are being spent. They need to be spent in ways that help everyone in the province of Ontario. We need to spend money on transit; we need to spend money on health; we need to spend money on education; we need to spend money on a thousand things that will help the people of this province. To get those monies, we need to make sure that everyone pays their fair share.

It is no longer acceptable to New Democrats and to the people of this province that ordinary people are being asked to pay again and again and again, when those who have the wherewithal and the money do tax avoidance by spending the money offshore. This is a land of opportunity, this is a province of opportunity, but it has to be a province of opportunity for all, not the selected few.

I commend the government for bringing this bill forward, but I also ask the government to please start bringing more meaty bills forward; have the finance minister, please, sit down with his counterpart from other provinces and with the federal government; have the government draft legislation, which, in conjunction with others, will make sure that there is no longer tax avoidance; and sit down and start really asking yourself the question about the GST/HST tax avoidance, which is going to be taken off over the next four to five years, costing the treasury \$1.3 billion that we simply do not have.

That's it in a nutshell: a small bill, a small help for small business, and part of a much larger problem where the solutions have not yet surfaced from the government bench. They need to do so and they need to do it with the next bill that they bring forward, that needs to be meatier, that needs to be more focused and that needs to actually deliver some results to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's a pleasure for me to speak today on Bill 105. I must commend the member from Beaches–East York for the good advice that he gave. I was very surprised. I was wondering, “Am I listening to an NDP member speaking?” I was not sure. But he brought a very, very good idea.

There's something that we both agree on: We have to help small businesses. They are the ones who are creating jobs. They are the ones who maintain the economy that we have in Ontario. They are the ones that employ the most workers in Ontario.

Today, I want to commend the small businesses in my community of Ottawa–Vanier. They are everywhere. Like I said in the past, they are our community leaders, they are our volunteers, they are the ones who contribute to

fundraisers for the hospitals, for the community centres. They are great people.

As I said before, I'm from a long line of small business. I am the only civil servant in my family. My family—my grandfather, my father and now his son—continues the business that was started in 1944 during the war, and it's still in existence. They hired not many employees, but it made the difference in the small community where I'm from, about 300 in population. They do hire about—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: With regard to Bill 105, this is just a small bill, really and truly. I believe it just really touches upon the edges. It's a bill that, in fact, maybe gives the persona that this government is really trying to do something for small business, when, in fact, it's merely a drop in the bucket.

Again, the legislation actually exemplifies what is wrong with this government and their approach to governing, really and truly. They're unwilling to go far enough to take the decisive action which is really needed to provide real tax relief for Ontarians today.

Having been a small business owner for 25 years before I came to the Legislature, I truly believe that it's the small businesses in Ontario that are the backbone of the economy here.

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This bill doesn't really go far enough at all. Again, it's a perimeter bill which makes people think for a fact that this government is really doing something wonderful. Well, if they really wanted to do something wonderful, they'd do something about the skyrocketing hydro rates.

When I go along the streets and talk to small businesses back in the riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, they say, “Rick, we have to turn out half of the lights in our building during the day, because that's when we're paying the high rates. We're finding the rates are becoming more and more expensive every day.” That's crippling small business; that's not helping small business. You take a look at, recently, the rate increases in WSIB—again, killing small businesses.

So, Speaker, although this bill doesn't go far enough, we will support it in the long run.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I commend my colleague from Beaches–East York for a good lead: 45 minutes of information and well-informed commentary.

Like him, I agree that exempting small companies from paying the employer health tax on the first \$450,000 is a good thing. We forced the Liberals to remove that from the larger corporations, which they agreed to, so those that earn over \$5 million are now going to be paying that tax. We think it's good, because those large corporations that make over \$5 million are probably doing okay on their own. They don't need a government hand-out, which becomes a citizens' handout, to the big corporations.

But he added something else that we want the Liberals to pay attention to, and so far they haven't taken it very seriously. Starting in 2015, the government will start offering input tax credits that will refund the HST paid by corporations on things like meals, entertainment and company cars. At the moment, they pay the HST. In 2015, they're going to start getting a credit on those input taxes. The point that we make is, do we need to do that? Can citizens of Ontario afford to allow corporations to get a refund on the HST on things like meals, entertainment and company cars? I think it's wrong. The member from Beaches–East York thinks it's wrong. But this Liberal government isn't taking that seriously.

By the way, they will also refund the HST paid on office utility bills, the heating and lighting. And while it's okay for manufacturers and factories, it's not okay for banks.

The member makes great points.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I too want to congratulate the member for Beaches–East York for his speech. He highlighted very important points and gave us some constructive criticism, which is nice to see.

I want to say, especially for the benefit of the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, who called this bill peripheral, that this bill will exempt businesses with annual payrolls of under \$5 million from paying the employer health tax on the first \$450,000 of their payroll each year. So, Mr. Speaker, over 12,000 businesses in Ontario will no longer be paying this tax. I think this is significant; I don't think that this is peripheral. So I wanted to make that clear.

Going back to the member from Beaches–East York, I was also glad that he spoke about BIAs. In a city like Toronto, which both he and I represent, BIAs really play an important role.

I know that in my riding of York South–Weston, I have BIAs such as the Eglinton Hill BIA, the Mount Dennis BIA and the Weston BIA. They all represent small businesses—they're all small businesses—and they're trying to revitalize areas of the city that are really in need of being refreshed. They do great work.

For those of you who may not know, this weekend, on Saturday, the BIA in Weston will be celebrating the harvest from 10 to noon. There will be lots of fun for all the families. Come on by. Come and take a look.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Beaches–East York has two minutes.

Mr. Michael Prue: I want to thank my colleagues—the Minister of Community Safety and Corrections, the members from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Trinity–Spadina and York South–Weston—for their comments.

The comments were very generous, and I thank you for them, but I also think that they all hit a common theme. We all support small business, or should all support small business, irrespective of which party you represent. Small businesses do a huge amount of good for our local economy. They do a huge amount of good for

our local neighbourhoods. I would tell people that if you have an option of buying from the little guy or from the big guy, start looking at the little guy. Maybe it costs more; sometimes it does. But the level of service and the strength of your community depend upon the support you give to small businesses. That's why I support this bill. I'm looking forward to much more, but that's why I support this bill: because it's going to help those small businesses.

My colleague from York South–Weston talked about BIAs. Yes, BIAs are absolutely and fundamentally important. I don't know whether they exist all across Ontario. I do know they exist all across Toronto, and they exist in many other of the larger municipalities—where the municipality, from its own money, funds half the cost of the BIA, and the local BIA, through a levy of their members, funds the other half. Where you see a strong BIA, you see wonderful shopping districts spring up and stay there. You see street furniture and flowers. You see places where people can eat outside on restaurant patios. You see street life and a vibrancy of the city or town which, without the BIA, would not exist. So I take my hat off to them as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 10:15, or shortly after, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I know we have lots of dentists in the crowd today because it's ODA's lobby day. I'm not going to introduce everyone, but I do want to make special mention of the president of ODA, Dr. Rick Caldwell. Welcome to all the dentists at Queen's Park today.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a couple of people to introduce: first of all, Dr. Visconti, all the way from Timmins, Ontario, who is here along with all of the dentists, but also, I have Lucie Laplante, all the way from Kapuskasing. She works in my constituency office and has put up with me all these years.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome students from Don Valley East, from North Toronto Christian School, to the Legislature here today.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to introduce my constituent Guy Boone, who is a professional engineer and the chairman of Professional Engineers Ontario's government liaison program in the Ottawa chapter. Welcome, Guy.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd also like to welcome the Ontario Dental Association and Dr. Rick Caldwell, the president, who happens to come from my hometown.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I want to introduce Dr. Roch St-Aubin, from Sudbury. His office is on the corner of

Elm and Elgin streets. He's also the chair of the political action committee of the Ontario Dental Association. We want to welcome him and his fellow professionals here today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would like to welcome Dr. Kevin Roach, from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, who is the Ontario Dental Association's representative from my area joining us at Queen's Park today. Of course, they'll be welcoming us at a reception later today as well.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would like to welcome Sydney Brouillard-Coyle. She's a 13-year-old from Essex, Ontario. I met her at We Day. She has been fundraising and volunteering since she was six. She wants to be the Prime Minister one day. She's here with her parents. She's right there. She is here with her parents, Christopher and Christine Brouillard-Coyle. They're both here.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to introduce a couple of constituents today. I've got Dr. Dave Jones, from the Dorchester area, visiting from the Dental Association, and Maggie Head, who is also a constituent of mine back home in Union, Ontario.

Mr. Bill Mauro: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to the House an old high school friend of mine, a basketball buddy and my current dentist, Peter Hryniuk, who is here as part of the Ontario Dental Association, in the east public gallery.

Mr. Frank Klees: We've all become very impressed with the exemplary performance of page James Prowse, from Newmarket–Aurora. I'm pleased to extend a warm welcome to his aunt Cheryl Deville and uncle Fred Gallagher.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am delighted that Khalil Ramal, the former MPP from London–Fanshawe, is here with us today. He is joined by Dr. Mahmood Moshiri.

I'm also delighted to welcome Dr. Peter Fendrich and everyone here from the ODA—big smiles for everyone.

I'm also pleased to introduce Adrienne Palmer-Spafford and Joanna Rizi from the Ontario Long Term Care Association.

Welcome, everyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Me?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's who you are.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Oh. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear you say it.

I'd like to welcome Dr. Jerry Collins, with the ODA, who is here—he has a dental practice in Orillia—and also Mrs. Balbir Gill, the mother of Gaggan Gill, who is my assistant here at Queen's Park.

I should point out to you, ladies and gentlemen, that Gaggan will be leaving Queen's Park shortly and finding employment with a cabinet minister in Ottawa. She'll be sorely missed.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to introduce a gentleman I've known for many years who keeps me

smiling. Here for the ODA lobby day is my dentist, Dr. Steve Lipinski of Mississauga.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd just like to welcome Dr. Paul Giuliani from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, who is here today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Everyone is being co-operative. I'm going to try to get through the rest of these introductions. Please make sure you just introduce your guests.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome Dr. Christina Heidinger from the great riding of Kitchener Centre, who is here for the ODA lobby day.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome again the father of Ian, our great page from Prince Edward–Hastings: Simon Chapelle—and also, from the ODA, my good friend Dr. Bill Hern.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like members to welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Dr. Ivan Hrabowsky from the city of St. Catharines.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a pleasure to introduce a good friend and the past president of the Ontario Dental Association, Dr. Art Worth.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Would you please help me welcome Dr. Waji Khan, who's with the Ontario Dental Association, from the Kingston area.

As well, would you welcome, please, in the members' gallery, from Professional Engineers Ontario, Annette Bergeron, the president, who is also from Kingston; Michael Price; Scott Clark; and their guest, well known to everyone here, Howard Brown.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to welcome—and I'm sure there are others that I'm missing, so I apologize—my favourite dentist from Burlington, Dr. Larry Pedlar.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome another dentist, Dr. Brian Teneschuk—very active with the ODA.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to welcome Dr. Murray Pearson, whom I'm having lunch with today.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd like to welcome the parents and family of Ravicha Ravinthiran: mother Sonthy; father, Ravinthiran; sister Luckshika; and grandfather Sivanayagamoorthy. They're not quite here yet; they're on their way, but I want to welcome them here today.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Dr. Blake Clemons, who is from my riding of Perth–Wellington.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Please welcome Lynn Posluns, founder of the Women's Brain Health Initiative. Many of us had breakfast to learn more about her project.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd like to welcome Dr. Totten, a dentist from the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome a good friend of mine, the former president of the Canadian Dental Association and the Ontario Dental Association and a great dentist from Ottawa Centre, Dr. Don Friedlander.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome Mr. Alan Korell from the PEO, who is the city engineer in the city of North Bay.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de vous présenter M. Roch St-Aubin, qui est un dentiste de la région de Sudbury and who is here with the Ontario Dental Association. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to welcome the parents of page Daniel. His mother and father and grandparent are here visiting the Legislature for the second time.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to welcome Dr. Charles Frank to the Legislature today, who is sitting behind us here—a dentist from our area.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all members for their indulgence and appreciate very deeply that you just did introductions—it's very helpful—and, as the Speaker always does, to introduce a former colleague, Khalil Ramal from London—Fanshawe in the 38th and 39th Parliaments. Welcome.

Another reason why I am very appreciative of your indulgence is there's a method to my madness. I have some guests in the House today. This is a history-making organization from all organized support, six-times-in-a-row champions of the Intercounty Baseball League, the Brantford Red Sox—with my apologies to the member from Barrie—with owner Paul Aucoin, field manager Adam Clarke, general manager Mike Bonnano, and all of the staff and volunteers of the Brantford Red Sox championship team. Thank you for being here. The two children in the crowd also played first base and third base. Anyway, the players are here as well, and we appreciate your talents and skill sets.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. I watched your press conference last night in the wake of the latest revelations of \$1.1 billion that you wasted to protect Liberal seats. You said that you're sorry. Here's the difference between your leadership and mine, Premier: Saying you're sorry isn't leadership.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I'll be starting immediately. Member from Sudbury, come to order. I'm going to start right away.

Finish, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Your style of leadership is that you believe leadership is simply saying you're sorry. I believe leadership is about holding people to account, holding people accountable for what they've done with taxpayer dollars. You failed to make this announcement last night; maybe you will this morning: Who got fired? Who is being dumped from cabinet? Who is being held accountable for this incredible waste of \$1.1 billion?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have done exactly what I said I was going to do when I came into office. I campaigned during the leadership on opening up the process, making sure that the information was available, and that is what we've done. That's why the tens of thousands of documents have gone to the committee: 30,000 documents from the Premier's office. That's why I asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation and to report on that situation. We have that report now, so the information that I said needed to be available is available. From my perspective, that's leadership. I said I was going to do it, I did it. You have the information. That's been the process.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I think the answer, Premier, is, if you will remove nobody from their job, it's time to remove you from your job, and bring in a new team.

Let me see if I understand your alibi on this. Your alibi is that you've spent \$1.1 billion in hush money to send to TransCanada and is you had nothing to do with it. You were out in the hallway when these decisions took place. You were out of the loop.

The reality is, Premier, your fingerprints are all over this. You actually signed the deal. You had a choice. You had an option. You could have said, "No, this is not in the interests of taxpayers. This is bad for the province of Ontario." You could have set a higher standard, but you signed the deal, you signed the document. If you're going to do that and sell us up the river, why should we trust you with the finances—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is really important that people understand we made a commitment, as did all the parties, to cancel and relocate the gas plants. That was our commitment. So as we followed through on that commitment, we took advice from officials. I have said that in the first instance—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shouting people down is not—I need to hear the response. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said, in the first instance, that there were decisions made that should not have been made, that we should have paid closer attention to the community. I have never said, as the Leader of the Opposition alleges, that I didn't take any responsibility. In fact, I've said the exact opposite. I was part of a cabinet that made this decision, and we worked to make the decision in the best way possible. There were mistakes made. I have apologized and I do apologize for those mistakes, but my responsibility now is to make sure that this never happens again, that we have the processes in place to make sure it never happens—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order. The member from Cambridge, come to order. The member from Halton, come to order—second time.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's incredible that the Liberals give themselves a standing ovation and a pat on the back. All of you could have said no. Not one of you actually stood up and said no. Not one of the Liberal benches ever took a moment to say this was wrong—not a single one of you.

The choice is clear—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The same goes both ways. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Kick him out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member who just said that might find themselves kicked out. Please finish.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not a single one of you said no. The only choice is to clear out this entire corrupt lot, change the government and get this province back on track.

Here's step number two: Call a judicial inquiry. Put the Liberals before the stand—the threat of jail time, the threat of jail doors closing—to compel them to tell the truth.

Premier, will you support our call for a judicial inquiry—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If I believed for one moment that there were anything criminal that had gone on, if I had seen anything in the Auditor General's report that would have indicated anything criminal, I would order a judicial inquiry. I would be looking for that.

The fact is that it is very clear now, as a result of all of the documentation and all of the reports that have been done, that there were mistakes made. The people who were making decisions made mistakes in terms of some of the decisions and some of the paths that they went down. I've said that. I have taken responsibility for that as a member of the government. What I said I was going to do was provide that information to all of the people who were asking for it. That's what I've done. We have the information, and now it's time that we need to make sure it—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: When a group of people choose to misuse taxpayer dollars—\$1.1 billion—and then cover it up and destroy evidence, do

you know what they call that, Premier? They call it fraud. They call it perjury. That's criminal activity. There is no more clear demonstration than that as to why we need a judicial inquiry. Put Liberals, put Dalton McGuinty, put Kathleen Wynne on the stand. Let's actually hear you before a judge who can compel the truth. Maybe it's going to take the threat of jail doors slamming shut behind the Liberals to get that truth, but I'm not going to give up on that. I will do that as Premier. I'll get the truth for taxpayers, and we'll get some justice for what you've done to rip people off.

You signed the deal. You had a choice. You sold us down the river. Premier, why did you sign the deal? Why didn't you say no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I came into this post, I said that we were going to open up this process, and we were going to get all the information that we could, and we have done that. In fact, the Auditor General has credited our government. What she said is that it was good to hear we're taking the report seriously and are taking some action and changing the way things are going to be done in the future. That's our responsibility. That is what governments should do in response to information that determines that there were decisions made that shouldn't have been made and that there were processes in place that should not have been in place. We're taking that action.

There are two things that are very, very important in this. One is that we site energy infrastructure differently. The Minister of Energy is putting new rules in place in terms of working with the community. The second is rules around political staff relationships with third parties and their ability to influence those deals. Those are the changes that need to be made.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, Premier, nobody believes that you happened to be out in the hallway when these decisions were made. You were co-chair of the Liberal campaign that chose to do this. You signed the key cabinet document that sold the province out and sold out taxpayers.

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These things have real-world consequences: \$1.1 billion could have built that subway to Scarborough; \$1.1 billion could have built a new hospital in south Niagara; \$1.1 billion could have built a new hospital in Vaughan, and you flush it down the drain to save Liberal seats.

Premier, the problem here is that you yourself signed the document. You sold the province down the river and the NDP sold their souls to prop you up. Isn't it time for a change? Will you call the judicial inquiry? Let's get the truth on behalf of taxpayers.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I went to committee. I answered the questions about my involvement. I made it very clear that I take responsibility for having been part of the cabinet that was trying to get a deal. There is no doubt about that. We were taking advice from officials.

John Kelly, who was counsel from the Ministry of the Attorney General, said, "In my experience, after 40 years of litigating, if you can avoid litigation, you should. It's a process that's fraught with risk."

Mr. Speaker, we were trying to make a deal. We were trying to avoid litigation. We were acting in good faith in an attempt to avoid future costs. That is the information that is available. I made it clear to the committee what my involvement was, and I take responsibility for being part of the cabinet that made those decisions.

Having said that, we all agreed in this House that those gas plants should be relocated. That was the agreement. We implemented that. I've said there were mistakes and I've taken responsibility for that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the reality. There are two important facts in the Auditor General's report. Number one, Premier, with all due respect, you weren't out of the loop; you were in the control room. You were calling the shots. They key decision, we find out on page 16 of the auditor's report itself—it said that the key deliberate decision was made when you signed the document and you sold the province down the river. You signed away any of the protections that taxpayers had to give hush money to TransCanada Corp. to save Liberal seats.

Premier, you signed that document. You had an option; you chose to sign that document; you sold the province down the river. I have no confidence in a Premier that makes those decisions, that has a pattern of behaviour that puts the Liberal Party ahead of the taxpayers. Will you do the right thing today? Will you call our confidence motion and let this Legislature decide if you have the ability to lead our province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: When I look at this whole situation, the thing that I think is the most problematic is that in the first instance, we did not get the siting of these pieces of energy infrastructure right. We did not listen to the communities. We did not do the right thing in terms of taking into account the concerns of the communities in the first instance. Had we done that, Mr. Speaker, had we had a process in place, as we do now, where we would take into account the concerns of the community, we would examine those and make sure we understood what those concerns were and have community buy-in in the first instance, then we would not be in this situation.

That is the problem. We are correcting that problem. It should not have happened, and I take responsibility for

having been part of the government that made that mistake of not taking the community's concerns into account in the first instance.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My first question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Auditor General found that the cancelled power deals will cost the people of Ontario almost a billion dollars. Does the Premier plan to challenge the findings of the auditor, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we've accepted the auditor's findings. We thank her for the findings. I will say that the OPA has a different set of findings. They used a different set of assumptions.

One of the points of this whole exercise is that estimates of cost vary. When you look out 20 years and you're trying to estimate what the costs are going to be, it is difficult. Witness the number of different numbers that have arisen over the past month even to today, where there are two different numbers in terms of the OPA number and the Auditor General's number, using different assumptions, so the cost estimates vary. That has been one of the issues that has been very challenging. I would suggest, mostly for the people of Ontario, in order that they try to understand this situation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It sounds to me like the Premier is saying that she doesn't believe the numbers that the Auditor General put in the report yesterday. The auditor found very clearly that the Liberal government, in their rush to reach a deal, drove up the cost of cancellation by hundreds of millions of dollars.

As a member of cabinet, the Premier signed off on that decision. How does she justify that sign-off?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that I did not say that I didn't accept the auditor's numbers; I said I did accept the auditor's numbers. What I said was what she actually said, which is that there is uncertainty in these numbers. The Auditor General says that herself, and anyone who has spent time with accountants—and I love accountants; the father of my children is an accountant. But the fact is that numbers change depending on the assumptions, and that's what the Auditor General said.

There has been confusion about the numbers. That is why I asked the Auditor General to look at the situation. I accept her findings and, as I said, I have done everything in my power to get information out to answer the questions that have been asked, and will continue to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: As co-chair of the Liberal Party campaign and as a cabinet minister who signed off on the decision, the Premier knew, or should have known, that the Liberal government was driving up costs, and that the public would be on the hook. When the Premier was signing off on those decisions, was she thinking as an elected representative of the people or in her role as Liberal campaign co-chair?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have many times taken responsibility for my role as a member of cabinet in the process that took place. It's true: We were attempting to get a deal and avoid litigation.

I will just quote from David Lindsay, who is a former Deputy Minister of Energy: "If you have a contract and you don't honour the contract, the party on the other side can sue you for breach of contract and the damages would be all the benefits they were hoping to procure ... try to avoid litigation was the strategy ... what we in the OPA were trying to do."

So there was an attempt to avoid litigation; that is absolutely true. I take responsibility for being part of a cabinet that was attempting to avoid litigation, and all the costs into the future that that would mean. I take responsibility for that. I have said that we need to have different processes in place, and that's what we're doing.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well, Speaker. I have to say that, no matter how hard she tries to muddy the waters about the real numbers, the auditor was pretty clear yesterday: The government cut a great deal for TransCanada and made it easier for the Liberals to hold on to power, but they stuck it to the people of Ontario.

Now, the Premier was one of four cabinet ministers who signed off on the arbitration preventing the OPA from defending the public interest. Why did she do that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have answered questions about my role in being part of a cabinet that was attempting to get a deal on this. We were working to get certainty, and we were attempting to avoid litigation. That is quite clear. We have said that over and over again, because we believed—and, certainly, the staff in the Premier's office believed—that to incur litigation or to go into a situation where litigation would be certain or probable was not responsible.

I've also said that we need to make changes. We need to introduce new rules that would limit political staff involvement in commercial third-party transactions. I've said that clearly. I said it yesterday. We'll be bringing in policy in the next week or so that will put those new rules in place.

It's very important that we learn from the findings of the Auditor General. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier likes to talk about how much things have changed or how much she might want to change things in the future, but she was part of a team that signed off on this crass decision in a desperate bid to hold on to power. So if the Premier thinks this was wrong, why didn't she stand up and say so when she had the chance?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to step back and remind everyone that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Specifically, the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—others, as well—will come to order, second time.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we were doing was, we were implementing a decision that had been a promise of all three parties. We were determined that we were going to relocate the gas plants because that was the right thing to do.

Had we made the decision in the first place—had we listened to the community, had we examined the community's concerns, then we would not have been in that situation. But we all agreed that the gas plants needed to be relocated. We were implementing that, and there was a cost associated with that. There would have been a cost associated with it whether the PCs or whether the NDP had been in office. That's just the reality.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll remind the Premier that I was the only leader during the election campaign who said I would not promise to cancel those plants until I knew how much it was going to cost the people of this province because that was the responsible position to take during the election campaign. I'm the only one that took it.

The people in Ontario are now on the hook for over \$1 billion, and that much money could hire 18,000 nurses in Ontario. It could buy—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Actually, on all levels here, all members, relax.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't use this as an opportunity to steal some comments.

Please finish.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: That money could hire 18,000 nurses. It could buy 311 PET scanners. Instead, it's going into the pockets of private power companies.

The Premier says she's sorry today, but when she had the chance, the power, to actually do something, she chose the Liberal Party's interests over the people's interests, and she signed off. How does she explain that decision?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just first say that I have said repeatedly that the cost of moving these plants was unacceptable. She's absolutely right that it was not acceptable, and it came about because of decisions that were made that should have been made differently and a process that did not work.

But the leader of the third party and her candidates opposed both plants. They said they would relocate them; they opposed those plants. That is the reality, and we have them on record saying that they would.

So what we need to do is make sure that we understand that, when decisions are made around large pieces of infrastructure, whether it's roads or whether it's energy infrastructure, when those contracts are entered into,

when changes are made in those, there's a cost attached to it. We had better make sure we've got better processes in place. That's what we're doing on the siting of infrastructure and on the processes to get out of them.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the auditor confirmed what Vic Fedeli had told this Liberal government all along: that their attempt to steal a seat in the last election cost \$1 billion.

Let's put this into perspective. Barack Obama spent less money campaigning to become the President of the United States than you spent to save the member from Oakville's seat.

It's absolutely shameful. What bothers Ontarians the most is that the Liberal campaign chair who signed that cabinet document either didn't know what she was signing with a billion-dollar price tag, or she knowingly stood in this assembly and said it was only \$33 million.

So, Speaker, my question is very simple: Is she incompetent or did she knowingly tell this House it was \$33 million when she knew it was \$1 billion? That's why we need a judicial inquiry. Will she call it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to speak to the supplementary.

I just want to be clear once again, Mr. Speaker, that at every juncture, when I reported on a number, I was taking that number from information that had been given to me by officials. That is the only way that I had access to numbers. Those are the numbers that I used, and I have said repeatedly that the numbers have changed over time. That has been one of the issues around this whole situation. It's why, in fact, I asked the Auditor General to look at the situation in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, the number certainly did change. She said \$33 million, and it was \$1 billion. That's 2,640% that she was off. It proves she's got no plan, she's got no mandate, and she has no credibility left whatsoever.

She knew all along what the true costs of those cancelled gas plants were. The auditor said it as much in her documentation yesterday. She said at the time this Premier was standing up, saying it only cost \$33 million, that she had actually already paid \$330 million of that cost. She already paid a third of what it had cost. That's how much she knew when she knew it. Has she no shame?

She created the OPA to remove decision-making from the political sphere from energy decisions. Yet now she comes with her crocodile tears and says she's going to prevent political interference. She's already done it.

So, Speaker, the question is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please.

The Minister of the Environment will come to order. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to take the opportunity to congratulate my new energy critic. It's the first opportunity I've had in the House. She was one of three energy critics that were appointed at the time. Consequently, I asked the Premier if she could appoint two co-ministers of energy to match the three critics, but she turned me down, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West, come to order a second time.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —we're talking about the costs that are going into the pool of costs that affect the rates. Yes, these additional costs will impact and put upward pressure on the rates. On the other hand, in the last five or six months, we have taken some decisions that are going to be very significant in pushing the energy rates down. For example, there was the \$3.7 billion we saved on the Samsung deal. That \$3.7 billion is going to push rates down over the next 20 years.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Ontario's Auditor General said, "We believe that the settlement with TCE will not only keep TCE whole but may make it better than whole." The Liberal government made sure that TransCanada would get every nickel of profit and then some, in spite of the fact there was no reason to do that.

When the Liberal government cancelled the Oakville gas plant to save a seat in Oakville, TransCanada ended up making more money, not less. And everyday Ontarians are paying those bills.

Why did the Premier and her government put private power profits ahead of everyday families?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The plant in Oakville was poorly sited, and the government has accepted responsibility for that and has accepted the responsibilities for the additional costs. Indeed, the Premier has apologized for that.

In response to the people of Oakville, the PCs, the NDP and the Liberals committed to relocating the plant, and no party had precise costs at that time. The Auditor General, in response to the Premier, has now provided us with her estimate of the cost to do this.

Mr. Speaker, these involve difficult negotiations. There are expert people who came before committee and have said we ought not to be litigating this issue; it should be negotiated. The contract that resulted was as a result of the give-and-take of negotiations to avoid litigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, it's a shame the minister wasn't around when two parties in this Legislature told them, before they signed the contract, not to go ahead in Oakville. It might have saved some money.

The Ontario Auditor General said the reason that Ontario families are paying TransCanada more money

for cancelling the Oakville power plant is because the government promised to keep TransCanada whole. The promise to protect every nickel of profit came out of the Liberal Premier's office.

Why did the Liberal government put private power profits ahead of families, who are paying the bills?

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Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Ontario Power Authority was negotiating with TransCanada Energy. The negotiations were tough. Estimates were made by OPA—and I want to quote from the Auditor General's report. This is the Auditor General speaking: "Making assumptions about future events and their effects involves considerable uncertainty." Those are the Auditor General's words. "Accordingly, readers should be cautioned that while our estimates differ from estimates previously announced by the OPA, they will also likely differ from the actual costs and savings that will be known only in the future." Those are the Auditor General's words on page 3 of the report.

OPA made their best estimates on their assumptions. The auditor made hers, and the result is in the auditor's report, which we accept.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. For parents in Orléans and across Ontario, the health of their children comes first. But as we lead increasingly busy lives, it becomes more and more difficult to make sure we're making the healthiest choices for our kids.

This spring, our government's Healthy Kids Panel made a number of recommendations to fight childhood obesity. I understand that the minister made an announcement this morning in response to some of this advice.

Speaker, through you, could the minister tell the House about the government's plan to help parents make healthier choices for their kids?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Ottawa—Orléans for this question.

We know that the healthier our kids are, the less likely they are to develop a chronic disease later in life. That's why our government struck the Healthy Kids Panel: to give our kids the healthiest possible start. That panel provided very valuable advice, and this morning I was happy to announce that we're taking the next step in moving forward on that advice. We will help parents and children make healthier choices by giving the information they need, by putting calories on menus and menu boards.

This month, we'll begin consultations. We'll listen to parents, health professionals and industry partners, and this winter I will be introducing legislation that would require large chain restaurants to include calories on their menus.

I know the member from Nickel Belt has already indicated her support for this. I urge all members in this House to support this legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you to the minister. I know that parents across Ontario will be thrilled to hear that we are moving forward with menu labelling for large chain restaurants. This will certainly equip parents with more information to make better choices. But I think we all recognize that no one action will be enough to tackle the challenge of childhood obesity.

Could the minister tell the House about other measures the government is taking to give our kids the best start in life?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Last week, the Minister of Children and Youth Services and I announced the first initiatives responding to the panel's recommendations.

We need to give our kids a healthy start in life, and that starts when they're babies. So we're focusing on the first days, weeks and months of a child's life by enhancing breastfeeding supports in Ontario so that every mom in Ontario who wants to breastfeed will get the support she needs to do so successfully. This includes 24/7 Tele-health support because we know that babies are hungry around the clock.

As kids grow up, we know that good food at school keeps them healthier and boosts their academic success. That's why we've also announced an expansion of the Student Nutrition Program, to provide breakfast and snack programs for about 30,000 more kids in high-priority schools.

Because of these initiatives, aligned with the panel's recommendations to give—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. As I've indicated before, I don't like it when members do drive-by heckling.

New question?

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. The Auditor General told us that the cost to cancel the Oakville gas plant is significantly more than it needed to be and that a number of questionable decisions caused this. The auditor states, "The province, the OPA and TCE entered into an arbitration agreement that laid out the framework..." That's what sent the price soaring. This is all thanks to you, Premier. You signed the cabinet document that gave them the power to do this.

The auditor further states this deal "waived the clause in the ... contract that gave the OPA a defensible claim of not owing TCE lost profits."

So, Premier, when you signed that cabinet minute, you wrote a blank cheque to TransCanada. Will you finally admit you are directly responsible for this scandal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The government House leader.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has addressed those questions. The committee has looked into it. The Auditor General outlined a possibility of what might have happened, but at the same time, we had dozens of witnesses in front of committee who spoke about the potential for litigation, that it was much better to negotiate than to litigate.

The fact of the matter is that at the Premier's behest, we have put forward cost estimates provided by the Auditor General, and the Progressive Conservative Party—which aggressively made the same promises—will not furnish us with their cost estimates. We have asked for their candidates to come forward before the committee and talk about the costing that went to it. They have refused to come forward. We've asked the member from Halton, who stood in this Legislature day after day after day and asked for the cancellation of Oakville, to come to the committee, and yet he's refused.

Mr. Speaker, we have given the information to the committee. It's time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, it's obvious they have not learned any lessons from all this. The Premier herself said that we have 160,000 pages of documents, we've heard from 62 witnesses—yet with all of that, we still did not know the answer to the member from Cambridge's original question: How much did it cost? It took an auditor's report to tell us.

Liberal witness after Liberal witness testified under oath, yet they all denied that TransCanada was told they would be made whole.

Twice today, the Premier said, "We took advice from officials," but we know from the Auditor General that it was the Liberal government that told the OPA to locate the plant in Napanee. That decision alone, that decision to move that plant so far away, the auditor told us, added \$577 million to this bill, never mind that other issue.

Premier, despite your hollow apology, Ontarians want to know three things: Who's paying the money back, who's getting fired and who's going to jail?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not impressed with somebody's actions.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You can't rewrite history. The fact of the matter is that that party opposite made the exact same promises.

Daniela Morawetz, who's the president of the Chartwell-Maple Grove Residents Association in the Oakville area, went on Metro Morning. Do you know what she spoke about in May of this year? She talked about going to Queen's Park and the opposition parties being 100% behind her. She went on to say, "Nobody said, 'How much is it going to cost?' or put a maximum dollar value on cancelling it."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing will come to order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll try, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you won't. You will.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Every single party in this Legislature made the same promise. We came forward with the Auditor General's report, and more importantly, the Premier and the Minister of Energy yesterday outlined steps that they will take in order to make sure this does not happen again.

Mr. Speaker, we call on the justice committee to undertake similar work and provide advice to this government and future governments. You cannot rewrite history.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, the report yesterday from the auditor on the Oakville power plant was quite damning. A section in the report says, "The Premier's office committed to compensating TCE for the financial value of its contract for the Oakville plant, even though events occurred that we believe could have enabled termination" costs "at a much lower cost."

My question is, why did the Liberal government commit to paying more money instead of paying less?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Prince Edward-Hastings will come to order, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the contract had a provision called force majeure. Basically, it's a cancellation clause that would come into effect at some future time. The cancellation clause date in the agreement at hand was February 2016. Notwithstanding that, the Auditor General calculated her costs and expenses based on a starting date of December 2015. So the auditor, on one hand, was saying, "This thing would be operational in December 2015," and yet she's relying on a cancellation date in February 2016. With respect to the Auditor General, there's a significant inconsistency on that particular issue.

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In addition, they were negotiating—all the parties on our side—in good faith.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's unbelievable that they're challenging the auditor on her decision.

The fact is, your government had an opportunity to get out from underneath this at very little cost. For some reason—and we know what that is, because you were trying to save some seats in Mississauga—you ended up doing what was the most expensive alternative.

I ask you again: Why is it that you made a decision that committed Ontarians to paying far more than they should have for the cancellation of these plants?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. Three parties promised to cancel the gas plants—both of them. None of us had estimates at the time. In the meantime, the Premier, in her leadership, asked the Auditor General to do a report. Notwithstanding the fact that the auditor was taking nine months to prepare a report, the opposition continually tried to get the exact cost at committee.

In April, we asked the president of the OPA to come before committee with his most current estimate. That most current estimate was \$350 million—or \$310 million. The reality is, nobody knew what the cost was going to be. At that very committee hearing, I remember that the critic for the Conservatives was making an estimate of what the cost would be—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Bill Mauro: My question is for the Minister of Rural Affairs. Minister, when we were first elected in 2003, we inherited three deficits: a financial deficit, a services deficit and an infrastructure deficit. In the first seven or eight years of government, we committed about \$60 billion to infrastructure, including major projects in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan. We further committed another \$35 billion over the next three years.

Now, small northern and rural municipalities, including those in my riding—Neebing, Oliver Paipoonge, O'Connor, Gillies, Conmee and Atikokan—have benefited greatly from our infrastructure announcements historically.

My question to the minister is, can you describe for me what your ministry and the Ministries of Transportation and Infrastructure have done to benefit those smaller municipalities through programs like MIII?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I say good morning to the member for Thunder Bay–Atikokan, and I want to thank him for his question.

Our budget in 2013—we put \$100 million in for new infrastructure programs for small, rural municipalities right across the great province of Ontario. My colleague the Minister of Transportation and myself had the opportunity to visit Ontario—north, south, east, west—over this past summer. It was an opportunity for us to consult widely with mayors and reeves and wardens—a wonderful group of people—and to get their input on how we could allocate this \$100 million to support roads and bridges in rural Ontario.

I'm pleased to say that, last Friday, the Premier and I had the opportunity to be in beautiful Simcoe, Ontario. A wonderful mayor was there, Dennis Travale of Simcoe, saying, "This is the right program, the right time for rural Ontario."

Twenty-one communities across the province will be receiving—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I stand up; you sit down.

Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Thanks to the minister for that response.

This summer, Minister Murray was in my riding. He held a consultation on the longer-term infrastructure program, and he held that in Murillo, a small hamlet in the community of Oliver Paipoonge, in my riding.

Now, small communities have benefited greatly, as I said in my opening question, on previous infrastructure announcements. However, they are still very concerned with stability and permanency. These small communities, by and large, have very large geographic land bases; they have relatively small tax bases with which to support their infrastructure needs. One bridge in a small community like Neebing or Oliver Paipoonge could significantly skew their budget.

Minister, I'm asking you to tell me what we're doing to ensure that small northern and rural municipalities have some ability to plan in a very positive, proactive way on a go-forward basis.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do get excited about investing in roads and bridges and waste water treatment plants—great stuff right across the province of Ontario.

To answer my colleague from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Minister Murray and I travelled across the province. We met with over 500 municipal leaders to talk about the challenges they face. Out of this consultation, we are looking at ways for 2014 that will be a centrepiece of our budget to have—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Jeff Leal: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we're probably going to be doing some projects in the member's riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to help that community out with their infrastructure needs. We're looking forward to putting a permanent program in place. Hopefully we'll see that in the 2014 budget, because that's what AMO, that's what ROMA and that's what all the municipal leaders across Ontario are asking for, and we're going to deliver.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question today is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday I asked why you were defending 200% completion bonuses for the already-grossly-overpaid TO2015 executives. You continued to rationalize wasting \$7 million for people to simply show up for work and said that the compensation packages are based on the officials who hosted successful events like the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

That's perfect, Premier. I'm going to hold you to that and insist that you follow suit, because the government of BC actually cancelled millions in bonuses for its employees working on the Olympics. Premier, will you shut down these inappropriate taxpayer-funded bonuses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said that the board negotiated these compensation packages. If you look at comparators with other games, they are consistent with those.

I just want to say that this morning the minister and I had the opportunity to open and welcome the PASO AGM, people from 41 countries who are here to be welcomed by Ontario—and the wonderful progress that we are making on the Pan Am/Parapan capital—the venues.

What is confusing to me and, in fact, embarrassing is that the party opposite is not going to take part in the reception. They are not welcoming the people from these 41 countries to Ontario. I hope that both parties will reconsider and join us, because I would like to say that the whole Legislature welcomes the Pan Am/Parapan folks—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.
Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Indeed, they are all welcome, but not at any cost. We are just at the tip of the iceberg with the Pan Am expensing, partying and bonuses, and nobody is fixing it—no one. The Premier, the finance minister and the minister of the Pan Am Games all scapegoat the appointed TO2015 buffer board when things go south. We see this with eHealth, we saw it with Ornge, and we saw it with the gas plants. You need to take accountability, Premier.

Tonight you have the gall to celebrate, the day after the Auditor General's report on Oakville—some \$1.1 billion in waste that could have actually financed these very games. Tonight's party will run another—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Tonight's party will run another \$500,000 for a good time, or up to \$1,000 per guest. Does the Premier have no shame?

Will the Premier release all the budgets and total costs for Pan Am partying?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have said that the minister has spoken to the board. We are reining in the expenses. We are making it very clear that the judicious use of public dollars has to be the norm at the Pan Am Games. But, Mr. Speaker, part of the conditions of getting the games was hosting this reception, hosting the people from these 41 countries here in Ontario.

The Pan Am Games, for me—and I said this to the PASO AGM this morning—is about all the young people in those 41 countries who are training right now. They're swimming, they're stretching, they're jumping, and

they're running. It has to do with why we went into this bid, why we wanted to bring the Pan Am Games here. Part of that is hosting the people who are involved in all of the 41 countries, bringing them here and—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

1130

THUNDER BAY GENERATING STATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday we learned that no price is too high for Liberals when it comes to courting votes in Mississauga and Oakville. I wouldn't be surprised if the people in Thunder Bay are blowing a fuse today. Can the Premier explain how her government can blow \$1 billion shuffling two power plants out of the greater Toronto area and not even have a penny left over to convert the Thunder Bay generating station to gas?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the plant in Oakville was poorly sited. The government has accepted responsibility for that and the additional costs incurred, and the Premier has apologized for that.

All parties committed to cancelling these two gas plants. We now have the price from the auditor. What we're doing now, moving forward, is improving the siting of large energy projects. We've asked the IESO and the OPA to travel across the province and consult with people. They provided a report with 18 recommendations. We've accepted those recommendations. Those 18 recommendations will ensure that there will be no siting errors and there will be no unwilling host communities for these large infrastructure projects.

Mr. Speaker, that's what we've done. We contracted for 21 gas plants in the 10 years, and 19 of them are—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the people in Thunder Bay have waited a long time for some straight answers about their gas plant conversion. By the way, the minister should know that they actually want a gas plant conversion. Today, they're still waiting, even as Ontarians across the province are learning that they're on the hook for this government's \$1-billion scandal.

What's worse is that for \$1 billion, this government could have easily converted the Thunder Bay generating station to gas and would have had plenty of money left over.

Can the Premier please explain to the people of Thunder Bay why she threw \$1 billion down a hole instead of providing power for mining and resource development projects across the northwest?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: If the leader of the third party would ask a unique question, I would give a unique answer. She has asked that question before. I've indicated that we haven't made a decision on converting the Thunder Bay gas plant. It's still under consideration. We will be meeting. We've got meetings scheduled with the

task force from Thunder Bay. We're continuing to talk to them. We have advice from our ministerial agencies. The decision will be made soon, in due course. I expect that Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario will be happy with the outcome. She's barking up the wrong tree, Mr. Speaker.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of the Environment, and it affects all people in Ontario.

Protecting the quality of the air we breathe is a fundamental concern for all Ontarians. When I was the CEO of CivicAction, reducing the number of cars on our roads was one of our objectives, in hopes of cutting down the amount of airborne pollutants. Pollutants that cause smog, for example, contribute to respiratory and other health problems for tens of thousands of individuals every year.

Lately, I have been pleased by the conversations with long-time residents from my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, where they expressed the noticeable improvements to their air quality over the past few years relative to years prior.

Would the Minister of the Environment please share with us the extent to which smog in Ontario has been handled over the last decade?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's an excellent question of great public interest, and I want to thank the member for it. Our government, she would know, has taken very strong action on smog pollution in Ontario. The results really have been good.

I have some statistics here to share with members of the House. The average number of smog advisory days per year has been decreasing since 2003. There were 17 or more smog advisory days each year between 2003 and 2008. Since 2009, Ontario has had three years with fewer than 10 smog advisory days. This year has been nearly smog-day-free so far.

These observed reductions in annual smog can be largely attributed to a 36% reduction over the last several years in nitrogen dioxide, one of the major ingredients of smog, as well as a 33% reduction in fine particulate matter, one of the health-damaging components of smog.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Again, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Residents throughout Ontario will be pleased that our government has been working hard, and successfully, to reduce smog-causing pollutants. It will be reassuring to the residents of Scarborough-Guildwood that the improved air quality they have noticed over the past few years is the product of amiable action by our government.

Speaker, through you, could the Minister of the Environment please share with this House more specifically how our government is reducing the air pollutants that lead to smog and other setbacks in our air quality?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, it's an excellent question. As members would know, smog contributes to

nearly 10,000 premature deaths a year in our province, according to the Ontario Medical Association.

I'm pleased to be able to mention a number of initiatives that are improving air quality in Ontario: a massive investment in public transit is obvious to all in this province; our government's phase-out of coal-fired generating stations is nearly complete, despite encouragement from the benches of the official opposition to burn more health-damaging coal. As well, over the objection of our Conservative friends, we have strengthened the Drive Clean program. Cars, trucks and vans are the biggest domestic source of smog in Ontario. So it matters that car-generated air pollution is reduced by a third due to Drive Clean-required car repairs.

The Ontario Medical Association, the doctors—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. The gas plant scandal cost the taxpayers of this province more than \$1 billion. The Ornge air ambulance scandal cost taxpayers untold millions. But more important, it cost the lives of patients. When the full truth is known, we'll find that the ineptitude and mismanagement under the watch of this government also cost the lives of four dedicated first responders. We're now told that Ornge is conducting a strategic review of its operations.

If there was one consistent theme through 18 months of hearings into the Ornge air ambulance scandal it was this: Ornge should not be in the aviation business.

Can the minister tell us if that advice that came from staff, from pilots, from paramedics and from stakeholders—is that recommendation part of the review?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I must start by saying I find it disappointing that the member opposite would prejudge the investigation that is under way with regard to the crash in May, Speaker. But I can tell you that Ornge is very committed to patient safety and to the safety of the men and women who work at Ornge. They are also very committed to ensuring that they deliver the best possible value for the money they spend. I am enormously impressed with the new leadership at Ornge. They are looking very closely at important questions. They are engaging their own staff; they are engaging people from outside of the Ornge organization who have a lot to offer. They are dedicated to improving the quality of care and the value for money at Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: So the minister doesn't know if that is part of the strategic review. We're going to assume that it's not.

There are two Transport Canada inspection reports that were issued in March of this year. Both of those reports validate the testimony of witnesses who testified to the fact that Ornge should not be in the aviation business. From aircraft equipment to pilot and paramedic training to the sustainability of the current structure, it is

very clear that Ornge should not be in the aviation business.

Would the minister tell us this: Why are she and Ornge so intent on perpetuating the Mazza scheme that will continue to put the lives of patients and first responders at risk in this province? Why will she not take the advice of sworn testimony that makes it very clear that Ornge should not be in this business?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

1140

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I can tell you is that the new leadership at Ornge has brought an entirely different approach to providing air ambulance. They are working with other partners in our health care system. They're working with critical; they're working with our hospitals; they're working with land ambulance. They are really working to integrate Ornge into our health care system in a way that has never happened before.

As I said earlier, I am very impressed with the work of Dr. Andrew McCallum. I'm very impressed with the work of the new board. They are determined to make the right decisions for the people of this province. I do wish that the member opposite would support them in their work and support the front-line men and women who come to work every day to save lives.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre déléguée aux services en français. Les francophones de la région de Durham ont organisé un gros rally ce matin appelé SOS Désignation Durham. Ils essaient de recevoir la désignation depuis 2009, mais le gouvernement continue d'ajouter des barrières à leur désignation.

Quand c'est le temps de se faire réélire, le gouvernement a prouvé qu'il pouvait agir très vite, comme la vérificatrice générale nous a démontré dans son rapport sur les centrales au gaz de Mississauga et Oakville. Mais quand il s'agit d'aider les francophones de Durham à recevoir la désignation, ça prend beaucoup trop de temps. Ma question est simple : pourquoi les délais?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais remercier la députée de l'opposition pour sa question. Je suis très surprise d'entendre ses commentaires aujourd'hui—son intérêt pour la région de Durham. Nous travaillons avec la région de Durham depuis très longtemps, et les délais ne sont pas causés par nous. Nous les appuyons. Nous aimerions qu'elle soit une région désignée. Maintenant, on veut l'assentiment des députés de l'opposition, et il y a des réticences.

J'ai rencontré les députés qui représentent cette circonscription, et il y a encore de la résistance.

Alors, j'encourage les gens. L'office des affaires francophones travaille avec eux. On veut continuer et on

les remercie pour leur détermination de bien vouloir être une région désignée. Je les encourage à collaborer avec nous et à essayer de convaincre les députés qui représentent cette circonscription-là.

M^{me} France Gélinas: La région de Durham rencontre les exigences pour la désignation, mais il semble que le gouvernement continue d'en demander plus—plus de lettres d'appui, plus de propositions des différents paliers de gouvernement—au lieu de les soutenir dans leur droit d'avoir des services dans leur langue.

Quand est-ce que le gouvernement va s'occuper des communautés francophones et commencer à aider, plutôt que d'entraver, la désignation de la région de Durham selon la Loi sur les services en français?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Pour la désignation, il y a des critères qui avaient été établis dès le début, et la région de Durham ne rencontre pas ces critères-là. Maintenant, comme avec Kingston—il y avait une bonne volonté de la part des élus de la région de Kingston, et ça a été facile, avec leur approbation, de désigner la région de Kingston. On n'a pas ce même appui-là de la part des députés de la région de Durham, alors je les encourage à continuer de travailler avec eux et avec le conseil municipal et le conseil régional pour s'assurer qu'on puisse désigner cette région-là. J'encourage ma collègue de la circonscription de Nickel Belt d'aider dans ce processus.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I didn't get this in in time, earlier this morning, but Dr. Rita Kilislian, a dentist from Peterborough, is here with the ODA lobby day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: A point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would also like to welcome some constituents from Belleville. Ralph and Diana Neale are here, and Kate Neale, who has been the spokesperson for Bill 30. I'd like to congratulate her on her hard work this year as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I, too, would like to welcome the Neale family, including Trish Neale, Kate's aunt. We've heard a lot about Kate as we've debated this bill, and I'm delighted you're with us today, Kate.

I'd also like to welcome Joanne Di Nardo and Florentina Stancu-Soare from the Canadian Cancer Society, and Annette Cyr from the Melanoma Network of Canada.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Earlier today, in response to a question from a Liberal member, the Minister of Health indicated that there would be legislation coming forward later. You know that it is the custom of this House that the announcement of legislation is to take place in this Legislature—not in the form of answering a lob ball question from one of her backbench MPPs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order, and for clarity purposes, you can anticipate and say anything you want in terms of legislation. There is no rule that says they have to do it in a certain manner. So whatever that kind of guesstimation is, is very doable.

DEFERRED VOTES

SKIN CANCER PREVENTION ACT (TANNING BEDS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PRÉVENTION DU CANCER DE LA PEAU (LITS DE BRONZAGE)

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments for tanning / Projet de loi 30, Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet à des fins de bronzage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1146 to 1151.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On October 8, Ms. Matthews moved third reading of Bill 30. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Gélinas, France	Millroy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gravelle, Michael	Moridi, Reza
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Hatfield, Percy	Naqvi, Yasir
Barrett, Toby	Holiday, Douglas C.	Natyshak, Taras
Bartolucci, Rick	Horwath, Andrea	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoskins, Eric	O'Toole, John
Bisson, Gilles	Hudak, Tim	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Hunter, Mitzie	Pettapiece, Randy
Campbell, Sarah	Jackson, Rod	Piruzza, Teresa
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Prue, Michael
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Sandals, Liz
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Sattler, Peggy
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Scott, Laurie
Coteau, Michael	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Crack, Grant	MacLeod, Lisa	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Todd
Delaney, Bob	Marchese, Rosario	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Tabuns, Peter
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Thompson, Lisa M.
DiNovo, Cheri	McDonell, Jim	Vanthof, John
Duguid, Brad	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim

Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Fraser, John
Gerretsen, John

McNaughton, Monte
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Milligan, Rob E.

Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 95; the nays are 0.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the bill carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

GREAT LAKES PROTECTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES GRANDS LACS

Deferred vote on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 6, An Act to protect and restore the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence River Basin / Projet de loi 6, Loi visant la protection et le rétablissement du bassin des Grands Lacs et du fleuve Saint-Laurent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1155 to 1156.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On February 27, 2013, Mr. Bradley moved second reading of Bill 6. All those in favour please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Miller, Paul
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Forster, Cindy	Millroy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Fraser, John	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Hatfield, Percy	Oraziotti, David
Campbell, Sarah	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chiarelli, Bob	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Jeffrey, Linda	Sattler, Peggy
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Crack, Grant	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Delaney, Bob	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Dickson, Joe	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Duguid, Brad	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Fife, Catherine	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie

Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hudak, Tim

MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm
Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia

Shurman, Peter
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

Tom Lenehan served in many hockey and soccer capacities for more than 20 years as a volunteer, referee, coach, instructor, and president of the Clarington Recreational Hockey League.

Two teams were also inducted. The Flying Dutchman midget team were winners of the OMHA championship in 1986 and 1987. The midget C Bowmanville baseball team won the all-Ontario championship in 1985, 1986 and 1987. The list goes on.

I'd like to also congratulate the Clarington Sports Hall of Fame organizing team. The committee includes Cathy Abraham, David Blakely, Trish Stone, Hugh Walters, John Witheridge, and Clarington's community development coordinator, Erica Mittag. Thank you, and congratulations to all of those being recognized.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 62; the nays are 33.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? The Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So ordered.

There is a reception for the historic Brantford Red Sox in room 340, presently to be received.

There are no further deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1159 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd just like to welcome all of the engineers here. I have been a 51-year payer of a membership in the PEO, and I am just very happy that they are here today. They are going to have a great celebration downstairs tonight from 5 to 7.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome Dr. Viran Toor to Queen's Park. He's here from my riding, specifically Port Elgin.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CLARINGTON SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr. John O'Toole: There will be nothing in this on the gas plant scandal; it's from my riding of Durham.

I'd like to pay tribute to the local heroes of my riding who will be inducted into the Clarington Sports Hall of Fame on Saturday, October 19.

Sarah Couch became the first female in 102 years to play in the Ontario Hockey Association when she joined the Bowmanville Junior C Eagles in 1992. As a member of the Toronto Aeros, she won a provincial gold and national bronze medal. She also won a world championship silver medal on the Canadian women's roller hockey team.

Golfer Betty Ingram won various local, provincial and national championships.

Ray Preston signed with the Hamilton Red Wings and Guelph Biltmores in the 1950s. He later focused on coaching and giving back to amateur sport across Ontario.

HOMELESSNESS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Tomorrow, in recognition of World Homeless Action Day, a public memorial will be unveiled in my community of London, Ontario, to commemorate lives lost as the result of homelessness. The memorial is a collaborative effort between the London Homeless Coalition and the city of London and responds to the desire of people who have experienced homelessness themselves to remember and honour their friends who died on the streets. It comes after two years of planning and fundraising and was inspired by similar monuments in Toronto and Edmonton.

The London Homeless Memorial says to individuals who are homeless and to the family and friends who love them that their lives matter, that they have the same rights to dignity and respect as everyone else. It also provides a focal point for efforts to address homelessness in London and to track the number of people who die on our streets.

Homelessness is a community issue that requires a community response. I am proud of the work that is being done in London to develop housing-first approaches that are individual- and family-centred and partnership-based. At the provincial level, I urge MPPs to support these efforts by ensuring adequate incomes and affordable housing to prevent the scourge of homelessness in our communities.

SOUTH-EAST OTTAWA COMMUNITY HEALTH CENTRE

Mr. John Fraser: I am pleased to rise today to speak about an important organization in my riding of Ottawa South. Last week was Community Health and Wellbeing Week, and I would like to recognize the South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre, a dedicated organization working in my community since 1974.

Since its beginning, this essential organization has offered services to thousands of families in my riding of Ottawa South, especially low-income families, new Canadians and seniors in our community. Partnering with other organizations throughout the region, South-East

Ottawa offers integrated primary health care, encourages community development and health promotion, and provides resources for youth, counselling services and outreach to high-need neighbourhoods. Their mission is to foster a healthy, welcoming, diverse and safe community; promote healthy development of individuals and families; and enable community members to help one another.

With programs like Better Beginnings, Better Futures, the Good Food Box and Early Years Outreach with community houses, the centre is delivering those services to those who need them most.

On behalf of the families of Ottawa South, I'd like to thank the executive director, Leslie McDiarmid, the staff of the centre, the board and the volunteers for all the work they do to make people's lives better.

COMMUNITY LIVING KINCARDINE AND DISTRICT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to recognize and congratulate Community Living Kincardine and District for inspiring possibilities for the past 50 years. Recently, this Community Living association hosted a 50-year celebration in Kincardine to salute the founding families, its members, its volunteers and its staff.

Director Andy Swan recognized that back in 1963, families had to find their own options for their sons and daughters. Fortunately, the families of these people had the desire, strength and commitment to push back against what were considered the possibilities of that day. These founding families—the Fergusons, the Stones and the Lamberts—became advocates, board members and fundraisers in a concerted effort to help in the creation of something other than the reality they were told their children were to live.

I attended the 50th anniversary, and when the founding families affectionately spoke of their sons and daughters and how they wanted better for them, I can tell you that there wasn't a dry eye in the house.

Today, Community Living Kincardine and District has evolved into a growing range of inclusive services that enable individuals to be contributing members of society. Local businesses in the Kincardine area offer employment to the CLKD members, as well as allowing them a level of independence and a chance to demonstrate their abilities.

To the founding families of Community Living Kincardine and District, dating back to 1963, I extend a sincere thank you and I tell them to take pride in the possibilities that they have inspired.

BICYCLE SAFETY

Mr. Jonah Schein: On November 23, 2012, Tom Samson was struck on his bicycle and killed. Tom was a much-loved primary school teacher, a husband and a father of two small children. Tom was my age. He coached basketball and chess. He was known for his

sense of humour. He took his kids to the Wychwood Barns farmers' market every Saturday afternoon. Speaker, his death struck close to home.

For years, cyclists have held memorial rides and painted a white ghost bike to remember fallen cyclists. Last winter, on a freezing dark night, I rode with our cycling community to the site of Tom's accident, and Tom's ghost bike has remained at the corner of Lansdowne and Davenport ever since.

Last spring, Tom's family contacted my office. They were concerned because the city wanted to remove Tom's memorial bicycle. Today, with the help of city councillors Layton and Mihevc, a motion is being introduced to ensure that the ghost bikes are recognized as memorials and that they are left in place for as long as the family wishes. Ghost bikes serve as a reminder to everyone to share the road and to be respectful. They are also a reminder to us, as legislators, that we must do better to protect cyclists, and that means making the proper investments to ensure that our roads are safe for our friends and families.

I hope that members of our community will join cycling advocates tomorrow night for a meeting in Davenport's ward 17 to help us advocate for safe streets for all.

ÉCOLE NOTRE-DAME-DES-CHAMPS

M. Phil McNeely: Dans un peu moins d'une heure aura lieu la cérémonie d'ouverture officielle de la nouvelle école élémentaire du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est, le CECCE. Située à Notre-Dame-des-Champs dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Orléans, l'École élémentaire catholique Notre-Dame-des-Champs permet d'accueillir 360 élèves de la maternelle à la sixième année. Une garderie y est également aménagée, ce qui représente 26 places additionnelles pour les enfants de ce secteur.

Une nouvelle école, qui a d'ailleurs ouvert ses portes aux nouveaux élèves en août dernier, permettra de mieux desservir des élèves ayant droit à l'éducation catholique en langue française.

De plus, l'école est également construite selon de rigoureux standards en matière de développement durable et d'efficacité énergétique. Le gouvernement de l'Ontario continue à faire de l'éducation une priorité, et la construction de nouveaux établissements scolaires en est une des preuves.

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J'aimerais remercier, pour leur collaboration et leur travail de premier plan, le président sortant de CECCE, M. André Ouellette, et le directeur général, M. Bernard Roy, et féliciter le nouveau président du conseil, M. Denis Poirier dans son nouveau rôle. Bonne première année scolaire 2013-2014 aux élèves de Notre-Dame-des-Champs.

AUTOMOBILE SHOW

Mr. Bill Walker: I rise in the House today to tell you about a first-class event that debuted September 14 at a

world-class golf resort in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Legions of car fans from all corners of the world flocked to the shimmering lakefront award-winning Cobble Beach resort and golf course just north of Owen Sound to see a unique exhibition of 120 iconic vehicles, from horseless carriages such as a 1903 Oldsmobile Model R and a 1904 Ford Model AC and vintage sports cars to race cars like the Gilles Villeneuve Ferrari 312T3 F1 and supercars such as the Ferrari SA Aperta and McLaren 12C Spider, as well as Isotta-Fraschini, Pierce-Arrow, Rolls-Royce, Plymouth Hemi Cuda, Ford T-Bird, and Acadian Beaumont two-door coupe, just to name a few. Needless to say, they were smitten by the sight and sound of these exotic and rare collector cars.

I would like to recognize concours show chairman and founder and Cobble Beach owner Rob McLeese and his family, staff and volunteers, as well as their team of esteemed collectors, restorers and concours judges for staging a successful first-of-a-kind Concours d'Elegance show in Canada. I'm absolutely certain it will become an annual attraction, ensuring a tourism and culture windfall for Grey and Bruce for many years to come.

I'd also like to add that a portion of the proceeds from the show will be donated toward the funding of Sunnybrook Health Sciences' rooftop helipad.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have had the opportunity to witness Canada's premier classic car concours that seemed like something out of the James Bond series of films, and I'm honoured to say that it rivalled long-established shows around the world and may be poised to become the best one, bar none.

I welcome everyone to Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound to attend this event next year.

FRANCOPHONE SHELTER FOR WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'd like to speak today about the opening of Toronto's first francophone shelter for women and children in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. The opening of this shelter is part of this government's plan for investing in the people of Ontario.

Speaker, 1.4% of the residents in Scarborough–Guildwood claim French as their first language. This is a community I've had the privilege of engaging many times before and since my election.

There is great value in creating a plan to address the issues facing Franco-Ontarians in the GTA. There is a gap in services for this group, and I'd like to thank Minister Madeleine Meilleur, as well as Minister Ted McMeekin, for their observation in addressing this gap, as well as Nathalie Dufour Séguin, president of la Maison, Jeanne Francoise Mouè, executive director of la Maison, and Kevin Pal, regional director for the Ministry of Community and Social Services, for their tireless efforts to bring this shelter to the GTA.

Domestic violence is something that no one is immune to, regardless of one's ethnic, cultural, religious, racial or

linguistic background. Domestic violence and violence against women and children is prevalent in every community. It is an issue that needs to be addressed, and I'm glad to work with a government that is dedicated to protecting this province's most vulnerable citizens. Creating a safe place for Ontario's women and children and addressing the needs of Franco-Ontarians is just one more way in which we are one Ontario, regardless of the language we speak or the country we come from.

BRIGDEN FAIR

Mr. Robert Bailey: If it's Thanksgiving weekend and you're in my part of southwestern Ontario, all roads lead to Brigden for the Brigden Fair, the largest fall fair in southwestern Ontario. It's the 163rd annual.

Brigden Fair was first established in 1850 for the promotion of agriculture through community involvement. Over those years, the Moore Agricultural Society has continued to serve the community and maintained those traditions. The first fair in 1850 was held at a settlers' farm called Reilly's farm in St. Clair township, but over the years it migrated to Brigden.

This year, they're also celebrating 25 years of agriculture in the classroom. This program started in Lambton county and it's called A Little Bit of Country.

It's the largest fall fair in our part of the county, and as we come to the end of the year, all the champions from the livestock competitions progress onward to the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto.

It's also a big day in Lambton because of the IPM awards, the International Plowing Match awards, from Lambton county, a legacy that was left over from the plowing match a number of years ago. There are four awards given every year to the young farmers, men and women who are going to go on and distinguish themselves in agriculture.

Again, come out to the fair in Brigden this Thanksgiving weekend and say hello.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

CHRIS LEWIS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that one representative from each caucus be allowed to speak in tribute to Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner Chris D. Lewis for being elevated to the rank of commander within the Order of Merit of the Police Forces by the Governor General of Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to do a tribute from all three parties for up to five minutes. Do we agree? I didn't even hear a no. We agree.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'd like to welcome OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis and his daughter Stephanie to the Legislature.

I am pleased to inform the House that during a ceremony held on October 4 at La Citadelle in Quebec City, His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada, elevated Commissioner Lewis to the rank of commander within the Order of Merit of the Police Forces. He is the first Canadian police leader to be elevated to all three levels of the Order of Merit of the Police Forces.

I was at the ceremony at La Citadelle in Quebec, and I was extremely proud to watch Commissioner Lewis receive the medal. As someone who works closely with the commissioner, it is a pleasure when others see in him what I have always seen in him: his leadership, his empathy, his devotion to his job and to the people he works with. As the minister who oversees the OPP, and also as a friend, it was an emotional experience and one that I will always remember.

The Order of Merit of the Police Forces, established in October 2000, honours the leadership and exceptional service or distinctive merit displayed by the men and women of Canadian police services and recognizes their commitment to Canada. The primary focus of the order of merit is on contributions to policing and community development, and there are three levels: member, officer and commander.

To be appointed to the Order of Merit of the Police Forces is, indeed, a great honour, but to be elevated to the level of commander of the order of merit is a tremendous achievement. Appointment to commander recognizes outstanding service and demonstrated leadership in duties of great responsibilities over an extended period, usually at the national and international level.

I am fortunate to have first-hand knowledge of Commissioner Lewis's strong leadership abilities and of his commitment to the members of the OPP and the communities and citizens he serves. I see those qualities every time I work alongside him, and I see them reflected every day in the organization he leads.

We were together in Elliot Lake after last year's tragic mall collapse. We met with first responders, with community leaders and with families. Not only did he show leadership as the commissioner of the OPP, but he showed compassion and humanity. Being himself from Sault Ste. Marie, they felt he was one of them, and his presence was much appreciated. He is not only a great commissioner, he's a great person, and we are very lucky to have him.

Just last month, Commissioner Lewis celebrated 35 years of public service to Ontario. Since joining the OPP in 1978, Commissioner Lewis has amassed a wealth of operational policing experience, particularly in front-line service delivery, various investigative disciplines and tactical operations.

He is also a strong advocate of community-based initiatives, playing an important role with the United Way and the Ontario Law Enforcement Torch Run for the

Special Olympics. His 35-year commitment to the people of Ontario as a member of the OPP and as a champion of charity makes him an inspiration to us all.

1520

This national honour is the highest recognition of his 35 years of public service excellence, and he certainly deserves it. Stephanie, I am glad that you are here today with your father. Throughout his life, your father has had demanding jobs and shouldered the heavy responsibility of keeping Ontario safe. On behalf of all Ontarians, I want to thank you and your family for sharing him with us all these years. I know your father is extremely proud of you, and I'm sure you're also proud of him.

He is a great leader and a great man, and I know this Legislature and the people of Ontario will join me in thanking Commissioner Lewis for his service and congratulating him on this tremendous honour he has received.

Mr. Steve Clark: As Ontario PC critic for community safety and correctional services, it's truly an honour to rise on behalf of our caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to pay tribute to Commissioner Chris Lewis of the Ontario Provincial Police. I want to welcome Stephanie here as well with Commissioner Lewis. I know that tonight you'll be feted as well at the commissioned officers' annual mess dinner, so we appreciate you being here today.

Speaker, I want to say off the top that typically when we hold one of these tributes, it's to mark the end of a distinguished career, and certainly, as the minister said, we want to mention the tremendous 35-year career that Commissioner Lewis has with the OPP; it's an outstanding career. But I want to stress that Ontarians are very fortunate that Commissioner Lewis has many, many more years of service ahead of him. Indeed, earlier this year, he was reappointed to another three-year term as commissioner of the OPP, a role he has performed with excellence since August 2010.

Today we recognize another outstanding achievement in Commissioner Lewis's impressive career: his elevation, as the minister said, to commander within the Order of Merit of the Police Forces. This distinguished honour, as the minister has said, was bestowed upon Commissioner Lewis by His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston, Governor General of Canada. As well, the minister mentioned the reasons for this award, which is to honour "leadership and exceptional service or distinctive merit displayed by" our fine "men and women of the Canadian police services."

I should acknowledge, for those watching at home, that there are three levels to the order: member, officer and commander. It's also important to note some of the things that Governor General Johnston said in regard to the fact that it's one of the most prestigious honours we have here in Canada. So it stands as a special point of pride for every uniformed and civilian member of the OPP—and, I should add, every Ontarian—to know that Commissioner Lewis is the first Canadian police leader to be elevated to all three levels. It's a significant honour

for our province and for all Ontarians. That's why I was so pleased, when we talked about this earlier this week, that the parties agreed to honour you today in this manner, which I think is only appropriate given your exemplary service to Ontarians.

I can think of no leader within police services more deserving of being that trailblazer than Commissioner Chris Lewis. Throughout his remarkable career, he has inspired those under his command to be better police officers and better citizens. But in true demonstration of leadership, Commissioner Lewis has helped build stronger communities by setting an example for those from outside the OPP to follow.

Speaker, with your indulgence, I want to quote Governor General Johnston's speech on Friday about the scope of this award and how much emphasis it places on an honoree's impact on his or her community.

The quote: "This honour recognizes the fact that your job is about ... more than strict policing and law enforcement. Rather, you are community builders in the broadest sense, helping ... create a sense of trust, belonging, well-being and, of course, security, that is so essential to strong communities and nations."

In other words, Speaker, a true leader recognizes that they must do more than just strengthen the organization under their command. Through their words and actions, they create a culture that ensures that each citizen and every organization that comes into contact with them is made better for the experience. That's not easy in any endeavour, and it's particularly challenging in policing. Our police forces have an incredible responsibility to protect the safety and security of our citizens.

The integrity and sense of duty that Commissioner Lewis brings to work with him each and every day should give all Ontarians confidence that this authority is truly in trusted hands. Coming from eastern Ontario, I have to tell you that we feel a very special pride in Commissioner Lewis. Although he was born in Sault Ste. Marie, we consider him one of our own, with his distinctive and distinguished career as regional commander for the OPP's east region. I have to say, on a personal note, I have the utmost admiration and respect for Commissioner Lewis for his steadfast dedication not just to the nearly 10,000 OPP personnel in his command but also to the communities they serve.

Every time I see you, whether it's at the AMO conference, a barbecue in Kemptonville or on Sunday at the Fallen Firefighters Memorial, you always have a smile, and you always ask me about the people of Leeds-Grenville and my family. It's that personal connection, Commissioner, that makes you an outstanding and effective leader.

I want to join every member of provincial Parliament and every Ontarian in congratulating you on being elevated to commander within the Order of Merit of the Police Forces. It's a very distinguished achievement, and it's very deserving, sir. Congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I am honoured today to rise in this assembly on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party

and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to pay tribute to OPP Commissioner Chris Lewis. We haven't yet had the opportunity to meet, but after what I've heard today in this House, I'm very much looking forward to making your personal acquaintance.

I'm speaking on behalf of all members of my caucus and would like to extend our very sincere congratulations to you and your family on this well-deserved promotion last week to commander within the Order of Merit of the Police Forces. The rank recognizes outstanding meritorious service and demonstrated leadership and duties of great responsibility over an extended period of time, usually at the national or international level.

Chris Lewis has embodied these qualities throughout his 35 years of policing and has consistently shown incredible dedication to the province of Ontario in his role as commissioner, with responsibility for more than 6,000 uniformed officers, 2,700 civilian employees and 850 auxiliary officers over vast stretches of land and provincial waterways.

Since joining the OPP in 1978, he has devoted himself to the delivery of exceptional front-line service. He was first appointed to the Order of Merit of the Police Forces in 2004 and was subsequently promoted within the order in 2010.

Commissioner Lewis's commitment to public safety in Ontario and his leadership within his profession are exemplified by the important policing divisions he has worked to establish in this province, including the Cornwall Regional Task Force, together with the RCMP, as well as the Aboriginal Policing Bureau. He championed the OPP's involvement in the aboriginal day of action and took a strong and principled position on the role of the OPP in providing policing support for Idle No More.

In addition to the wealth of knowledge he has gained through a lifetime of experience, Commissioner Lewis also brings to his work a nuanced understanding of the complex issues facing First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples through study of aboriginal government and law at Athabasca University.

We applaud Commissioner Lewis for his deep commitment to community-based policing and his strong advocacy for community engagement through such initiatives as the OPP's United Way Campaign and the Ontario Law Enforcement Torch Run for the Special Olympics.

Being promoted to the rank of commander is a truly extraordinary accomplishment, making Commissioner Lewis the first Canadian police leader to be elevated through all three levels of the order. Ontarians are indeed fortunate to have his leadership, and I want to once again congratulate him on having earned this significant and well-deserved honour.

1530

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I want to thank all members for their very kind and thoughtful words in this tribute in honour. As is the tradition of this place, we will see that we have a bundle and a package of both the

Hansard and a DVD of these tributes and send them to you and to your family. We congratulate you as an entire Legislature.

On a personal note, if I'm allowed, I have known Chris for quite some time now, I think about 14 years. We have become friends, and it's so nice to see a friend elevated the way that you have been, deservedly so. I really appreciate your guidance and your help, as we are co-members on the board of Ontario's Special Olympics. I appreciate your work and dedication outside of your profession.

Thank you very much again. We will be making sure that you receive these tributes so that you get to play them over and over and over and over again—just in case it's needed for you. Anyway, thank you once again.

Applause.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Your committee begs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed?

Sorry, did you read the report?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement, I guess? I think I should do that first.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No? No statement. *Report adopted.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the standing order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is ordered for third reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ENREGISTREMENT DES LOBBYISTES

Ms. Forster moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cindy Forster: The bill amends the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998. The major features of the bill include the following:

Consultant lobbyists are required to file returns with the registrar within five business days after beginning to lobby.

The definition of "undertaking" in section 4 of the act is amended to provide that an undertaking to lobby on behalf of a client may be express or implied. Also, an undertaking to lobby may be in addition to other professional services provided to a client.

The definition of "in-house lobbyist" in sections 5 and 6 of the act is amended to provide that an individual employed by a person, partnership or organization is a lobbyist if any part of his or her duties as an employee is to lobby on behalf of the employer.

Lobbyists who lobby high-level public office holders are required to submit monthly reports to the registrar.

High-level public office holders are prohibited from lobbying for five years after leaving their position, with certain exceptions and exemptions.

Consultant lobbyists are required to file returns setting out political contributions they or their clients have made during the preceding 24 months if the Election Finances Act applies to the contributions.

Individuals are not permitted to lobby while they are being paid from public funds to provide services or advice to the government or a government agency.

Whistle-blowing protection is added to the act.

Certain offences are added to the act, and the maximum penalty is increased to \$250,000. The registrar is required to publish the names of individuals charged with or convicted of an offence under the act.

MANORANJANA KANAGASABAPATHY ACT (HAND-HELD DEVICES PENALTY), 2013 LOI MANORANJANA KANAGASABAPATHY DE 2013 (PEINE POUR CONDUITE AVEC APPAREIL PORTATIF)

Mr. Balkissoon moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 116, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for the use of hand-held devices while driving / Projet de loi 116, Loi modifiant le Code de la route pour augmenter la peine imposée en cas d'utilisation d'un appareil portatif lors de la conduite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, this bill, entitled the Manoranjana Kanagasabapathy Act (Hand-Held

Devices), 2013, amends the Highway Traffic Act to increase the penalty for driving a motor vehicle on a highway while holding or using a hand-held device, wireless communication device, hand-held electronic entertainment device or other prescribed devices. The penalty for each of these offences is increased to a fine not less than \$300 and not more than \$700. Offenders also receive three demerit points for each offence.

I move this bill in honour of this person, who had the unfortunate situation of losing her life in an accident in my riding as a result of someone possibly using a hand-held device while driving and losing control of their vehicle. I just want to say to the family that my heartfelt condolences go out to them for losing a member of their family who did not have the opportunity to say goodbye to her husband, her two children and her granddaughter.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK SEMAINE DE L'AGRICULTURE EN ONTARIO

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I rise today wearing my Minister of Agriculture and Food hat to honour the hard-working men and women who bring the good things that grow in Ontario to our tables every single day.

This week is Ontario Agriculture Week. It's a time for us to celebrate the important role Ontario's agricultural sector plays in our province's success.

La Semaine de l'agriculture en Ontario, qui se déroule maintenant, est un moment idéal pour célébrer le rôle important que joue notre secteur agricole dans la prospérité de la province.

Last year, the agri-food and agri-products sector contributed \$34 billion to Ontario's economy and supported approximately 740,000 jobs. It's a very, very important part of our economy.

Ontario's food processing sector ranks as the province's second-largest manufacturing industry, and our local food is valued and enjoyed beyond our borders, with food exports hitting a record high of \$10.8 billion last year.

That's really why it's so important for us to recognize the dedication of the people who have made this industry a cornerstone of our economy.

Supporting their success is part of our three-part economic plan to invest in people, to invest in infrastructure and to support a dynamic and innovative business climate across the province.

Cette semaine est importante non seulement pour nos agriculteurs et leur famille, mais également pour tous les gens de l'Ontario.

And that point, that celebrating Ontario Agriculture Week, honouring the people who produce and process

our food, is an important aspect of the one Ontario that I believe we are. This week is important not only for farmers and their families, but for all of Ontario.

From farm to fork, the impact of our agri-food industry is felt in rural and urban communities alike. Whether you live in a city like Toronto or Windsor or London or a small town like Seaforth, it's key that we fully understand that our agri-food sector unites us all in one Ontario.

When I visited Ottawa and had the opportunity to visit their large farmers' market and the Savour Ottawa festival, it really was an example of where urban and rural meet. It's very clear to me that there's one Ottawa that celebrates urban and rural alike.

1540

By working together to ensure the success of our farmers, processors and retailers, we are strengthening our communities and our economy.

En collaborant pour assurer le succès de nos agriculteurs, entreprises de transformation et détaillants, nous renforçons nos collectivités et notre économie.

On Monday, I challenged the agri-food sector to double its growth rate by 2020 and to create 120,000 new jobs in Ontario. I said to the folks who attended the Premier's Agri-Food Summit that we did not expect that the sector would be able to do that alone.

To help the industry reach this target, we'll be doing more—we already are doing a lot, but we will do more—to cut down regulatory barriers that hold back investment in the sector. We'll support innovation and innovative projects through our new Local Food Fund, and that will get more Ontario food on our plates and create jobs across the province.

We'll also continue to invest in initiatives like Growing Forward 2, which will help Ontario to leverage significant federal/provincial investments over the next five years. That is an example of the federal level and the provincial level working together with the sector to come up with the right programs to increase investments over the next five years.

We'll continue to support our local food bill, which, if passed, will help us promote and celebrate the good things that are grown, harvested and processed in Ontario.

I know, and I think everyone in this House knows, that by working together, we can continue to challenge ourselves to expand our thinking and our horizons to grow our economy and our communities in a way that will ensure sustainable, long-term success for future generations. That is what I hear from the agriculture community: They want a sustainable industry that will grow into the future.

Ontario's agri-food industry is vital to this province. That's why I ask my colleagues and the people of Ontario to join me not only this week, but each and every day throughout the year, in saluting and supporting our farmers and agri-food industry, because by doing so, we are helping ourselves, our neighbours, our communities and the entire province.

Parce que c'est là un moyen de nous aider nous-mêmes en plus d'aider nos voisins, nos collectivités et toute la province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Merci.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK SEMAINE DE LA PRÉVENTION DES INCENDIES

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This week, Ontario marks Fire Prevention Week. From October 6 to 12, fire services across the province are engaging with their communities to focus on fire prevention and safety.

This week is also an opportunity for us in the Legislature to help remind Ontarians that they play an important role in preventing fire losses and fatalities.

This year, the Ontario fire marshal is focusing on preventing kitchen fires. They are the number one cause of home fires in this province, and the truth is that they are very preventable.

La moitié de ces incendies sont causés par des gens qui ne font pas attention et laissent cuire des aliments sans surveillance. C'est une erreur qui peut coûter très cher. Le coût moyen des dommages causés par un incendie lié à la cuisson est de 24 000 \$.

A simple kitchen fire can quickly grow to engulf an entire house, and the risk of serious injuries is very real. Taking small steps to avoid kitchen fires is the sensible thing to do. In our busy lives, meals are a great time for Ontario families to join together. To make sure meals remain joyful occasions, Ontarians should follow some simple tips.

First, stay in the kitchen, especially if you are frying something or using a high temperature setting on the stove.

Second, keep anything that can catch fire—oven mitts, wooden utensils, food packaging, towels or curtains—away from the stovetop. Turn pot handles and any electrical wires inward so no one, especially children, can knock hot oil or food to the floor. Wear tight-fitting sleeves when cooking.

Cette approche raisonnable à la prévention des incendies, alliée à de meilleures pratiques de construction et à l'installation d'alarmes d'incendie et d'avertisseurs de fumée, a considérablement réduit le nombre de décès dus aux incendies dans notre province.

In 2012, we saw the largest-ever drop in the number of Ontarians who died in fires compared to the previous year. The number dropped from 86 deaths to 70. That number is still too high, though, and there is more we can do. That is why Fire Prevention Week is so important.

Plus de 13 millions d'Ontariens et Ontariennes sont mieux protégés grâce à l'excellent travail des pompiers de la province et à nos efforts collectifs pour prévenir les incendies, mais nous devons demeurer vigilants et tous faire notre part.

Mr. Speaker, alcohol is often a factor in many cooking fires, and that's why I'm glad to share with the members

of this House that the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management is partnering with the LCBO for this year's Fire Prevention Week. As part of that partnership, safe cooking brochures will be available in all LCBO stores across Ontario. This is an important initiative, and I thank all of those involved in making it a reality.

I invite my colleagues to take the opportunity of Fire Prevention Week to join me in thanking firefighters across Ontario. I would also like to encourage everyone in this House, and in the homes across this province, to adopt safe cooking practices so we can continue to reduce the number of fires and keep Ontarians safe. Thank you, merci and happy Thanksgiving.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Statements by ministries?

It is now time for responses.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to again recognize Ontario Agriculture Week. It's the second time—I also made a statement on Monday—but I'm always happy to recognize the work that our farmers do.

Ontario Agriculture Week was created by Bert Johnson, the PC MPP for Perth. For 15 years it has been a time to celebrate all the contributions of our farmers: the food they grow, the jobs they create, how they protect the environment and how they continue to support their communities.

This government has now introduced a bill that would replace Ontario Agriculture Week. We believe in the importance of local food, but not at the expense of celebrating everything that the agriculture sector contributes to our province. I appreciate that the Premier is open to our amendment to have two separate weeks and more opportunities to celebrate.

Ontario Agriculture Week is a good time to look at the state of the industry and their challenges. On Monday, the Premier challenged them to double their growth rate, but I was disappointed she provided no details on how she was going to address the barriers that our agriculture and agri-food industries are facing. She didn't acknowledge that this government is part of the problem.

In our survey, 77% of farmers and 75% of the food processors said red tape was increasing; 79% of food processors said the impact of increasing hydro rates was significant. And paying for gas plants will not help reduce that cost.

During the hearings yesterday on the Local Food Act, the consistent message was that the Local Food Act could and should be strengthened. If we want the industry to grow, it is not enough to just wish it to happen. As one member of the OFA said yesterday, we need to give them the tools, and then the government needs to get out of the way.

I hope that we'll have an Ontario Agriculture Week next year, and before then, we will have significant government action so we can celebrate that day.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm proud, as Ontario PC critic for community safety and correctional services, to rise on behalf of our caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, in recognition of this week being Fire Prevention Week. It's a week to let every Ontarian know about the important responsibility we have to protect our loved ones by doing everything we can to prevent a fire at home.

1550

As the minister noted, this year's theme is "Prevent Kitchen Fires and Get Cooking with Fire Safety." With the Thanksgiving weekend almost here, I know that many of us will be spending a lot of time in the kitchen. It's very timely to alert the public that cooking remains the number one cause of residential fires in Ontario. Every time we prepare food in the kitchen, there's a risk of fire. There are also a lot of things we can do to protect ourselves, and I appreciate some of those being mentioned by the minister.

This year marks the 91st anniversary of Fire Prevention Week, which has been happening every October in North America since 1922. Fire Prevention Week actually has its origins in the great Chicago fire of 1871, a tragedy in which 250 people lost their lives and more than 17,000 buildings burned to the ground. Today, October 9, is the 142nd anniversary of that terrible blaze.

Since then, we've had a number of changes in legislation mandating residential smoke alarms, along with the advancements in technology and building practices that have helped dramatically reduce fire fatalities. We can't underestimate the impact that fire safety education has had on reducing those numbers. The work of fire prevention officers and public safety messages delivered by Ontario's fire marshal have prevented countless injuries and deaths. I share with the minister to celebrate that we've had a significant reduction in fire deaths from 2011 to 2012. While we all welcome those declining numbers, let's never lose sight of the fact that even one single fire death is one too many.

As we mark Fire Prevention Week, I do want to acknowledge the work of the Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council. My constituency office in Brockville is located just down the hallway. I know that the hard-working staff of eight, under the direction of executive director Art Pullan, have been very busy leading up to Fire Prevention Week. They have sent out more than 1,000 education kits to fire departments across Canada with information for fire prevention officers that they're going to take to schools and events throughout this week.

It's important that I also acknowledge one comment that Art made about what MPPs can do to save more lives. He said that we must finally get my colleague from Oxford's, Mr. Hardeman's, Hawkins-Gignac bill passed to require carbon monoxide detectors in homes with fuel-burning appliances or with a garage attached. That's advice from someone with nearly four decades on the front lines of fire safety and prevention, so it's critical, I believe, that MPPs need to listen to him.

Again, I'm pleased to join with the minister in recognizing and promoting Fire Prevention Week. I urge Ontarians to practise fire safety not only this week with their family and friends but every week during the year.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to stand in the Legislature to recognize agriculture week. I am proud to be here speaking on behalf of my leader, Andrea Horwath, and my New Democratic colleagues, but I am perhaps even more proud to be able to stand in this place as a farmer.

Ontario Agriculture Week is more than the \$34 billion it has contributed to the local economy by the agri-foods sector. It is more than the 740,000 jobs that are dependent on the agri-food sector in this province. It's much more than promoting local food, as important as that may be. Agriculture week is about people: the people who grow crops and take care of their livestock 365 days a year. Agriculture week is about sitting in Tim Hortons in Tillsonburg or Temiskaming Shores and listening to farmers talk about the price of soybeans—and yes, we do grow soybeans in northern Ontario. Agriculture week is about the farm families who, whether they have 50 head or 500 or 5,000, do everything they can to make sure that their livestock are comfortable and healthy. It's about harvesting a bumper crop or watching a crop being shredded by hail. That's the difference between a happy bank manager and a not-so-happy one. Agriculture week is about the settlers who originally cleared the land and the waves of immigrants from around the world who came and still come to work in Ontario, on our farms, and who eventually end up owning their own farms. The names on the mailboxes on the rural routes tell the story, and the beautiful farms at the end of the lanes testify to their hard work and determination.

To us in this Legislature, Ontario Agriculture Week should be a reminder to acknowledge those who have given so much to our province and have so much more to give. As legislators, we need to heed their advice and work with them so they can continue to do what they have done throughout our history. We need to do more than press releases and challenges. They are the greatest industry. Farmers are the cornerstone of our society and our economy. They are one of our greatest industries, and they've done absolutely wonderful things without our attention. We need to work with them and not challenge them for press release purposes. We need to work with them.

On that, I'm very proud to be able to stand here as a farmer.

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to rise today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party to support Fire Prevention Week, which is a very important fire prevention and safety initiative.

As was mentioned, cooking is the number one cause of residential fires and the number two cause of fatal fires. Three quarters of cooking fires are stovetop, with half caused by unattended cooking, meaning that very simple actions can prevent these fires from starting: staying in the kitchen when using the stovetop; regularly checking ovens; and keeping flammable items away from the stove. These are easy, common-sense ways to reduce the risk of kitchen fires—an important message for all of us, as MPPs, to pass along to our constituents.

I also want to take this opportunity today to extend the NDP's support and thanks to Ontario's brave firefighters, to whom we owe a huge debt. Firefighters carry a heavy responsibility for the lives of the people in their communities. We must always remember the sacrifices of those who have lost their lives and who have suffered serious injury in the line of duty.

Firefighting is more than a job; it's a full-time commitment, which is why firefighters need support from every level of government and why government must do more to prevent fires, not only during Fire Prevention Week.

Government must talk with fire chiefs before enacting legislation that directly affects firefighter responsibilities, and ensure that firefighters have the resources they need to do their job safely.

When it comes to fire safety, cutting corners can lead to tragic consequences, especially for our most vulnerable citizens: those living in group homes, retirement homes, long-term-care facilities and hospitals. That's why my colleague Paul Miller, the MPP for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, has been fighting hard for two years to make sure that seniors living in care facilities built before 1998 get equal fire protection through automatic fire sprinklers in residents' rooms.

Another colleague, Michael Prue, the member for Beaches–East York, has put forward several private member's bills to improve fire safety. The first was to ensure that fire escapes are constructed from non-combustible materials, and the second would make inter-connected smoke alarms mandatory.

This Fire Prevention Week, I urge all MPPs to join the NDP in moving these important pieces of legislation through this House, to save lives.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: I think you will find there's unanimous consent to revert to motions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader has requested unanimous consent to move back into motions.

Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion concerning the order of precedence for private members' bills without notice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move the order of private members' business.

Do we agree? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business for tomorrow be changed such that Ms. MacLeod assumes ballot item number 48 and Mr. Fraser assumes ballot item number 47.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition here that deals with youth mental health in our schools and communities, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas youth mental health in the province of Ontario is rising at an alarming rate. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood or adolescence. Research shows that early identification leads to improved outcomes;

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"Whereas, pursuant to the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, studies suggest 15% to 21% of children and youth, approximately 467,000 to 654,000 children and youth in Ontario, have at least one mental health disorder. The consequences can affect children and youth now and into adulthood, their families/caregivers, schools, communities, employers and the province as a whole;

"Whereas the 2010 Ontario report by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*, made specific recommendations that would address the growing mental health and addiction crisis among youth in the province, but no further concrete steps have been taken;

"Whereas waiting lists for help are at a crisis level and our schools do not have the resources to deal with the growing incidents of bullying, addiction, anxiety, depression and suicide. Education and awareness is critical to remove the stigma;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to prioritize funding and resources for our schools and communities to help our youth with mental health and addiction illnesses and the resulting consequences."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to add my signature to the thousands and give it to James to be delivered to the table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on the topic of the Sheppard East subway extension. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

"Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

"Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

"Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

"Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

"Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

"Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

"To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I am in agreement, will affix a signature and send this to you via page Ian.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

"Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

"Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail."

I totally agree, affix my signature, and I'll give it to Ravicha to take to the table.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I affix my name with the thousands to this, and give it to Pratah to be delivered to the table, on behalf of—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

“Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

“Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

“Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

“Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

“Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

“Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

“To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line.”

I fully support the petition and I will give it to page Efua.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating OHIP-funded physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing the current provider of the service as of August 1, 2013; and

“Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide five to 10 visits on-site

only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

“Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider (OHIP physiotherapy providers—\$12.20 per treatment) to the highest-cost provider (CCAC—\$120 per treatment);

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments, if medically necessary, with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers.”

I sign this and give it to page Kieva.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

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“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I couldn't agree more. I sign it with the thousands and give it to Pratah to be delivered to the table.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

“Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

“Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

"Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

"Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

"Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

"Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

"To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I agree with this petition, sign it and send it with page 1an.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition as well to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

Speaker, I support this petition and send it to the table with page Peyton.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Apparently it's the most popular issue on the government's Common Ground website:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I sign this on behalf of the thousand or more dogs that have lost their lives and give it to Ravicha to be delivered to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 8, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to address Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act.

This legislation is further proof that this Liberal government has no real plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario—and will result in a whole new set of taxes. I look forward to explaining this in detail, Speaker, over the next 20 minutes. You've got that great joy today.

What is clear, after examination of Bill 91, is that the Liberals plan to continue to rely on eco taxes and larger bureaucracy to feed their spending addiction.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I do not believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe you're correct.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): No quorum, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll continue with my program. I was all alone here for quite some time, and it was getting lonely talking to no Liberals.

What is clear, after examination of Bill 91, is that the Liberals plan to continue to rely on eco taxes and larger bureaucracy to feed their spending addiction.

It's mind-boggling to see what this government has been claiming in the past couple of weeks regarding Bill 91. They actually seem to think that continuing these eco taxes, doubling the cost of the blue box program and creating new taxes for Ontario consumers will somehow create jobs. Speaker, I've always said that if new taxes created jobs, we'd all have two jobs by now.

We all know just how reliable the job creation claims of the Liberals are; we need look no further than the Green Energy Act. The promised 50,000 jobs haven't come anywhere close, no matter how much they claim. That was another Liberal shell game, and we don't need a repeat of that here for Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. With this approach to the economy, is it any wonder that we've lost 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the last decade alone?

Basically, this bill will see this Liberal government taking money straight out of consumers' pockets in a bid to create jobs in the recycling sector. Again, we all know how little we can trust the Liberals when it comes to big promises about creating jobs.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm not sure if it was better when none of them were there, Speaker—or the hecklers. I'm not really sure.

The right thing to do here is create the right conditions for the waste management industry, to foster economic growth, to regulate the marketplace and to let the private sector drive job creation. Government needs to set the right conditions for success then get out of the way.

Sadly, Bill 91 proves this government just doesn't get it. Perhaps the best proof of this is the fact that, if passed, this proposed law would continue all of the Liberals eco tax programs and create new taxes to fund the expansion of the province's recycling agency, Waste Diversion Ontario, which I'll refer to as WDO for the rest of this 20 minutes.

In fact, the legislation proposes we change the name from Waste Diversion Ontario to Waste Reduction Authority. What's the significance, you may ask? Well, an authority, by its very nature, can and will tax. It can impose new fees. There is no doubt in my mind that this government, the one that is fixated with what they call "new revenue tools," plans to use this authority to impose new registration fees on industry, on consumers—quite frankly, on whomever and wherever the Liberals want.

1620

But let's back up a bit and discuss Waste Diversion Ontario. Ontarians should know that this is the agency

that approved each and every Liberal eco tax imposed on Ontario consumers. It has to answer to no one, because it's outside of the environment ministry. That's why we have said that to restore true accountability, WDO must be eliminated and all oversight authority of the recycling sector should be brought back to the ministry, where it truly belongs.

Sadly, the Liberals have rejected this, instead tabling a bill that would give WDO extensive new powers to impose new taxes. They're going to levy fines, and they arbitrarily will decide how much Ontario businesses will pay for the blue box program. We simply cannot allow this to happen.

Currently, Ontario businesses and municipalities split the cost of the blue box program 50-50. But under Bill 91, the Liberals want to empower Waste Diversion Ontario, or the Waste Reduction Authority, as it would become known, to raise the amount that businesses pay by hundreds of millions of dollars a year, without providing a property tax offset. That means Ontario consumers would have to foot the bill for these new costs when making purchases at their local supermarket or department store, while getting no relief on their tax bill.

Equally as concerning about this legislation, as it's currently proposed, is the fact that this government hasn't costed anything included in it. We don't know what any of this is really going to cost us. We don't know how much the new waste diversion tribunal this legislation proposes will cost us. We don't know how many extra staff or costs the new Waste Reduction Authority will cost.

This government is simply flying by the seat of its pants. They have governed for 10 years; if you recall my riveting speech earlier, Speaker, it was the lost decade. They have governed over the lost decade without caring how much anything they have done is going to cost the hard-working Ontarians, and they show no signs of stopping now.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oakville and the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan, you're extremely loud. If you'd like go out and have a chit-chat in the hall, feel free.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, the bottom line is, please don't do it. Thank you.

Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I was talking about the fact that the Liberals have governed over 10 years, the lost decade, without caring how much anything they have done is going to cost. And they show no signs of stopping now. If you want proof of that, the examples, sadly, are plenty. We've seen eHealth; we've seen Ornge. We certainly hear a tremendous amount about—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Last warning. You can laugh all you want in the back too.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: May I continue, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You may continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you. I was speaking about how the lost decade—I have many examples of proof of the lost decade. We have the eHealth example; we have Ornge. We have the gas plant scandal, where it took an Auditor General to reveal the full and true number. We hear the Premier saying, “It will never happen again. Don’t worry.” Well, last week, we had Pan Am. This week we have—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I’d like to remind the member that we’d kind of like to stick to 91, which we’re discussing. You’re drifting a little bit. Can we drift back? Thank you.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I only had one more sentence before I was coming back—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I wouldn’t know that.

Mr. Victor Fedeli:—and it was going to be the NBA. I had been interrupted three times, so perhaps I repeated myself a bit too much about eHealth, Ornge, gas plants, the Pan Am Games—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You also did it again, and we won’t appreciate you doing it again. So get back to 91, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I know, but the scandals are so plentiful that it’s hard. You could draw very similar comparisons with what is being proposed here in Bill 91 to what the Liberals have done in the College of Trades. So, Speaker, I am going to make a direct comparison between Bill 91 and the College of Trades.

The Waste Reduction Act would repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002, yet it would continue every recycling program, every agency, every fee created under the old act. Bill 91 would give the Minister of the Environment the power to designate new materials and classes of materials for recycling and service standards, which must be established by cabinet through regulation. The government can then require, through regulation, that “producers”—it’s important that I put quotes on “producers”—meet these yet-to-be-determined standards for designated materials.

Under the bill, these producers would include manufacturers, importers and brand owners. This is significant, because companies such as Canadian Tire, Coca-Cola, Goodyear, Panasonic, Samsung, Target, Tim Hortons and Walmart would all be producers. This is what will happen here. Bill 91 continues Waste Diversion Ontario and gives this unaccountable organization enforcement powers, a bigger, multi-million dollar budget and a new name, the Waste Reduction Authority.

Now, here’s where I’m going to draw the similarity with the College of Trades, Speaker. This authority would have the power to set and collect fees, or taxes, to fund its own operations. The bill makes it optional for the authority to disclose how they have calculated these taxes. It starts to sound similar to the recently created tax from the College of Trades.

This would be a regulatory agency—

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan.

Mr. Bill Mauro: The fee levied at the College of Trades is not a tax, and none of that revenue accrues to the government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I imagine that’s quite true, but that’s for cross debate. I’m not quite sure that’s a point of order. I will not rule that a point of order.

Continue.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you. When a business gets a bill for something, it’s a tax, Speaker. A tax is a tax is a tax. No matter how they like to colour these names, we know they enjoy taxing all Ontarians. We saw that in the new WSIB tax. We saw that in the College of Trades tax. We see this in the new Bill 91 tax. This continues Waste Diversion Ontario and gives this unaccountable organization enforcement powers, a bigger, multi-million dollar budget and a new name, the Waste Reduction Authority. Similar to the College of Trades, this authority would have the power to set and collect fees, or taxes, to fund its operations. This regulatory agency would be headed by a registrar, or waste czar, whose job it would be to register producers—we’re back to that again—in the authority’s registry.

The registrar would then appoint deputies to help seek out producers, who would be forced to pay a tax to fund the operation of the authority. This tax, of course, would then be passed on to consumers as a new eco tax. The registrar would then assemble an army of inspectors to fan out across the province looking for violators to fine for not meeting its standards; again, very similar to the Colleges of Trades tax. The revenue generated from these fines would then be funnelled back into the authority.

1630

The authority will also be in charge of resolving disputes between municipalities who collect recyclable materials and producers who are financially responsible for recycling these materials. The strategy states, “The Waste Reduction Authority will need to acquire the human resources skills and expertise necessary to perform this important function.” So now we are creating a new bureaucracy to collect this tax. There is a lack of accountability as the authority is disconnected from Parliament, not subject to the freedom-of-information act and can only be reviewed by the Auditor General if the minister feels that it’s necessary.

There’s a section on intermediaries, as well. Although the Liberals claim that their bill holds individual producers responsible for recycling, these businesses may join an intermediary, which would also be required to register with the authority. It’s getting very complicated now. This cartel would then be required to follow the recycling and services standards established by the minister, and would be fined if in violation.

There’s also a section on blue boxes. Right now, under the Waste Diversion Act, municipalities and producers

split the cost of a blue box program 50-50. Bill 91 creates a new framework that the government could use to increase the amount industry must pay for this recycling. However, this transition, again, would be left to regulation. If the minister chooses to proceed, there are three ways to establish an amount that industry pays:

- (1) Municipalities and industry can strike an agreement.
- (2) The authority can create a funding formula.
- (3) Cabinet can set the amount.

Obviously, this presents some concerns for industry, which could be strong-armed into paying more.

I'd like to address the Liberals' eco tax scheme, which they now call "all-in pricing." The Liberals' shell game is to claim they're scrapping eco taxes, when all they're actually doing is moving the levy from consumers' receipts to price tags on the store shelf. That's all it is. It's a shell game.

What's worse is that eco taxes will undoubtedly rise as the size and power of the Waste Reduction Authority expands. To be very clear, every single Liberal eco tax program created since 2008—for electronics, for tires, for household hazardous materials—would be continued under Bill 91.

And now the ICI sector: The Liberals have allowed the recycling rate in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, which accounts for 60% of Ontario's waste, to drop from 19% in 2002 to 12% currently. The Liberals claim that they will use Bill 91 to set recycling targets for paper and packaging in this sector, but ICI is only mentioned in the strategy, not in the act. This, again, would be left to regulation.

In my remaining two and a half minutes, I would offer a conclusion: that almost a year ago, we, the Ontario PC caucus, presented a better way forward to protect consumers, to clean up the environment and to treat recyclable materials as a valuable resource that we should recover and recycle into products, not into waste.

Our plan would make Ontario a leader on the environment once again. To do so, we would introduce reforms that would protect consumers, improve our environment, provide greater accountability and oversight, inject competition into the recycling marketplace, create good-paying jobs and ultimately lead to a higher rate of waste diversion.

We should start our reforms by scrapping each and every one of the Liberals' eco tax programs. We do not believe that government should hand over the monopoly control of an entire market to a private sector organization, and we do not believe that the government should impose taxes—and new taxes—on Ontario consumers through a labyrinth of bureaucracy and then claim it had nothing to do with it.

As the Ontario PC caucus has pointed out numerous times in this House, the environment minister and his sidekick at Waste Diversion Ontario sign off on each and every eco tax that consumers are forced to pay, so I think it's somewhat disappointing—and, quite frankly, insulting—that the Liberals actually believe that if they make

the bureaucracy complicated enough, they can always deny what they're actually doing. All this bill does is create job-killing taxes and more red tape. So if this is the Premier's job creation strategy, Ontario is in even more serious trouble than I believe.

We in the Ontario PC caucus have a different vision for this sector. We believe we should create the right conditions for economic growth and let the private sector manage job creation, not the government. This bill is so badly flawed that it can't possibly be recycled. It just needs to be thrown on the scrap heap, along with the tired government.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to spend 20 more minutes with you this week, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First of all, I want to say welcome to the Ontario Waste Management Association, members of which are here and who did a very interesting briefing for us in the New Democratic Party earlier today at lunch.

My colleague is going to speak at length about this, but suffice to say that we are supporting this bill in the New Democratic Party, but—here's the but, and there are going to be a lot of buts—it comes after 10 years of incredible inaction on this file, and still there are some issues. Those issues need to be dealt with, and will be, I hope, at committee. We'll be talking about those issues over the course of the debate in the next number of days on this bill.

Suffice to say—this is a shocking statement—that 75% of our waste is landfilled still. That was news to me. That is shocking. We have one of the worst records of any jurisdiction in the developed world, certainly in Canada, and that has been under this government's watch. This is just one aspect of them dropping the ball on all environmental policy—probably the single most important issue for our generation and the generations to come, this being one aspect of it. I know that my colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo is going to speak to this at length, but much needs to be done. This is a small step in the right direction.

Ten years on, yes—that's what I'll agree with; that's probably the only thing I'll agree with the member from Nipissing on. It has taken 10 years to get here, and it's 10 years too long.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: We know that the Conservative model that we're using now is not working. We're not dealing with our waste, and we're still stuck around 25% of waste reduction. They're never very supportive of anything that supports the environment. This is very true.

Ontario needs a new framework, and I was happy with the critic for the third party that they generally were very supportive of this. Of course, there's going to be a lot of work at committee; I understand that. I've read the Coalition for Effective Waste Reduction in Ontario's submission to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment,

September 3, 2013. There's a lot of good stuff in there, and I think that's what we want to do. We want to work towards a solution to waste. We have to do something with it.

The nice thing about it is, it's going to decrease the need for landfills. It's going to help us recover a lot of products that cost more in their original production. We'll be able to use that. It's going to create jobs, and jobs are extremely important, so just from the jobs point of view, this is good. For those working in waste reduction now, if we can move that up from 25% to higher levels, it's going to mean more employment, more investment. That was pointed out when the minister presented this.

It's not perfect. There's a lot of work to do yet. There were meetings all summer with industry, and that's the road we are going, but I think we have to look at it as something that's a work in progress. We're going to get it as right as we can, and it's going to be good for the province, it's going to be good for the people and it's going to be good for the environment.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

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Mr. Jack MacLaren: The problem with this bill is that it's going to tax small business people and consumers, and that's not what we should be doing.

I'm a farmer. I have a combine that I bought, and if I had known this was going to happen, I probably couldn't have afforded it. With this new bill, it's going to be \$823 to replace the tires on that combine; last year, it was \$24. If you look over in Quebec, it's zero. So we have a Local Food Act for Ontario and we're going to have to get that local food from Quebec. I think that's just not fair.

We tried a few weeks ago to pass a bill called Fairness is a Two-Way Street Act, where we would shut the door on Quebec. I think we need to open that door because we can't afford to eat our own food. These tires are just going to be too darned expensive. So it's not fair, it's not right. These are going to be the highest taxes in the country on small industry—or even bigger industry—and we shouldn't be doing that at all.

Also, this whole plan of setting up an agency at arm's length, the Waste Reduction Authority—we know from past history with other agencies that are at arm's length from government, there is no oversight or accountability, or at least not effective oversight and accountability. And when you get into a situation like that, bad things can happen.

Here we have a group that we're going to put at arm's length from government, so the minister will have no authority or power. They're going to be exempt from the freedom-of-information act, and we won't be able to call the Auditor General to do an audit unless the minister agrees to it. And yet these people have the right to charge taxes and raise fines. It's going to go badly like it has in other organizations like the OSPCA where all kinds of people are being hurt by a corrupt organization.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to rise in this House, and this is my first time to speak on Bill 91.

I think all parties can agree that we've done a pretty miserable job on waste reduction in this province—at least for the last 10 years. It's not that we didn't know this was coming, because we've been having problems with finding places to get rid of our waste for a long time in this province. Parts of this bill might be a step forward. We're starting from a pretty bad place, and parts of it might be a step forward.

One thing I would share with members on the right here, the Conservatives, is that we also have some doubts about creating an impartial, uncontrolled authority because we've run into troubles in the past. We've run into trouble when the Conservatives created such a thing, called the TSSA. So we know that there are problems with that. If this body goes ahead, it is going to have to be made accountable. You just can't throw a body out there and say, "Oh, yeah, they'll take care of it."

In our meeting with the Ontario Waste Management Association, they brought up a very good point. One of the fears about not creating a body is that you scale back government so much—and we have that with MNR now. Forget about endangered species; MNR can't even patrol just normal patrols. There's not enough COs to do a normal patrol. So one of the reasons they're giving is that we need a separate authority so we can actually keep enough people on the ground to do something. We have to pick the lesser of two evils, because there has to be enough inspection to make any of this stuff work. The way it's working now isn't working, and these independent bodies often don't work either, so we've got a long road ahead to make this one work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nipissing has two minutes.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the members from Parkdale–High Park, Ottawa–Orléans, Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Timiskaming–Cochrane.

I have to say that I absolutely agree with the member from Ottawa–Orléans that it's not working, but I would remind you that have been in government for 10 years and it's still not working.

We obviously want to keep all electronics, tires, paint cans and batteries out of landfills. As we all know, these materials contain chemicals that are harmful to our environment. But we in the Ontario PC caucus have a much more intelligent way of dealing with these materials, which we laid out in November last year. Rather than create a complicated bureaucracy and massive new costs for consumers—incidentally, Food and Consumer Products of Canada estimates that the Liberals' plans for the blue box and ICI sector will cost Ontarians between \$300 million and \$500 million each year.

Instead of that, we would simply create the right conditions for economic growth. Under our plan, that means the Ministry of the Environment would set measurable and achievable recycling targets for manufacturers and

importers of electronics, tires and household hazardous materials.

The ministry would then set environmental standards to ensure that these materials are actually recycled and are not sent overseas in a shipping container or dumped in a landfill. The ministry would then monitor outcomes to ensure that targets are being met; if anyone breaks any of the standards set by the government, it would then be the responsibility of the environment ministry to enforce the rules.

In short, we believe that government should set measurable and achievable targets, establish environmental standards, monitor outcomes and enforce the rules. That's it. It's time to return the environment ministry to its role as a tough regulator.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is a pleasure, actually, to stand in the House this afternoon to debate and discuss G91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013. I'd like to preface my comments here today by quoting from the Ontario Waste Management Association, a document that they served up to us earlier today: "With the right policies, Ontario has the potential to become an environmental and economic leader in resource management."

That should be the guiding principle of this entire debate. I do think that it's also important for us to review why this issue is so urgent, and why we need to accelerate the policies, the legislation and the work of this committee as we go forward, because, obviously, the New Democrats will be supporting G91. It's long overdue, and we intend to make it stronger.

But that said, let's review why it is so important. The state of waste in the province of Ontario is quite dismal. Ontarians generate 12.5 million tonnes of waste per year, about one tonne per person. This is embarrassing. The waste we generate each year would fit in the Rogers Centre about 16 times.

We've had a long-standing discussion within our party about the best way to proceed. I think it's safe to say that G91 addresses some of the immediate concerns that we have, but there is a lot more to do.

There is also a missed opportunity, though, with this piece of legislation, which always leaves me wondering, when the government has the opportunity to craft legislation, why they just don't do it right the first time, because there is a considerable amount of work that is going to have to happen to ensure that G91 actually is effective.

I want to point out the fact that the act does not address diversion rates as it should. Yes, we are talking about reducing. Yes, we are talking about reusing. Yes, we are talking about recycling. We don't talk enough about recovering. Landfills in the province of Ontario—methane is the second-largest contributor to climate change. We have become quite complacent—and lazy, if you will—in the way that we address our waste, in our own lives and from a business perspective.

That said, the conversation around setting diversion targets and enforceable standards for producers to meet is laudable. We need to set standards. Those need to be

enforced. We do, of course, have concerns about creating another authority, the Waste Reduction Authority. I think that we are in agreement, in some regards, with our PC counterparts, primarily because we essentially just don't have the trust or the belief that this authority will (1) have the resources to do their job properly or (2) have the mandate to truly enforce the standards.

I think that that is primarily because this province has lost that vision. For a long time, the Liberal government was talking about moving towards a vision of zero waste. That is not prevalent in this bill whatsoever. We do have to set the bar high, because we don't often reach those standards that we set for ourselves. If you set the bar high, we might actually get someplace.

1650

I'd also like to say that we have some concerns around the authority. We would like to make sure that those staffing this authority are not getting paid exorbitant bonuses just for showing up for work, just for doing the job that they were paid to do in the first place. We want to make sure that the oversight for the authority is just as clear as the authority has for waste management.

I think that there needs to be progress on waste reduction and recycling because it has clearly stalled over the last 20 years. Ontario has the worst record in Canada. There are significant economic opportunities and environmental benefits from waste reduction, reuse and recycling. As the critic for economic development and infrastructure and also the critic for research and innovation—there are huge lost opportunities on this file to create local jobs, instead of shipping all of our waste somewhere else and giving jobs to other jurisdictions.

There is broad support for the individual producer responsibility approach, in which producers pay the full cost of end-of-life management of their products and packaging.

I'd also like to address the fact that effective waste reduction legislation requires finding new language around getting to that vision of zero waste. We're going to push the government to get to that place. A framework that recognizes the hierarchy of the three Rs, reducing, reusing and recycling—these three Rs came from many years back, when I was just in high school, just a baby, under the Bob Rae government. I do remember those days.

Clear targets and standards and enforcement by government—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: He is a Liberal now. I always feel the need to point this out. He did end up where he was always meant to be.

Education and public awareness, convenience for the consumer, and companies—not municipalities and taxpayers—pay the full cost of dealing with their waste in an environmentally sound way. These are some basic principles which should guide the legislation.

The benefits of Bill 91 encourage a greater shift towards producer responsibility. I've already made that point. It has the potential to increase diversion rates by setting strong material-specific targets. Again, there is

some uncertainty, though, over what these targets will be and the timeline for their achievements.

There is an expansion to the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, which is welcome. They are part of the entire waste diversion issue. That is a sector marred by very low recycling rates. The current rate in this jurisdiction for the industrial, commercial and institutional sector is only 13%—I think that the overall rate for the province of Ontario is set at 23%—which is a tad embarrassing.

It is also good that there is a consideration of disposal bans in the bill. This has been used in places like BC and Nova Scotia. Disposal bans can be an effective tool for preventing recycling materials from going to landfills and for promoting innovation and investment in waste reduction—again, a lost opportunity over the last 10 years. It's also important that viable collection options exist for banned materials.

Finally, landfill fees should reflect the full cost of landfilling. It should not be cheaper to send waste to a landfill than it is to recycle. There is a lot of work to be done on this issue as well.

Some of you may have this issue in your ridings. In the region of Waterloo, there's a disturbing trend that's happening. For many years now—I think we're on the third year, but in the last year, glass has been collected in the blue boxes. People have rinsed out diligently. They feel good about putting those glass bottles in the blue box, and they are collected dutifully and well by the municipality. Then that glass is sent to the landfill and is crushed there, and it's used in the roads, in the landfill and around pipes. This is costing the municipality \$1 million a year, putting taxpayers in a bind, putting the municipality in a bind. This is essentially because markets out there for glass recycling are few to none. Municipalities are mandated, under the blue box program, to collect the materials; they have no choice. I think it's safe to say that for a long time the burden of recycling and waste diversion has fallen to the municipalities. We certainly need to find a way to make sure that this burden is shared. It's a shared responsibility, essentially.

There are also, though, a number of limitations in Bill 91, and I want to take this opportunity to make it clear to the government that our implicit support of 91 will come with strings, as has all of our support for everything that the government has brought forward in the last two years.

The bill seems to have lost the vision of zero waste. Bill 91 doesn't mention the aim of achieving zero waste and so it makes us nervous. When you leave things out that should be in the bill, obviously it causes us concern. As stated, there are some serious trust issues we're experiencing.

The longer-term goal of the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Nepean—Carleton is holding court. I suggest that she gets back in her seat or goes out in the hallway with her friends to have a nice long discussion. In other words, keep it down. Thank you.

Continue.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll hold court too later on, somewhere; maybe in the backroom.

Just to go back to my line of thinking, the longer-term goal of the act should be to move to a province in which goods that are not safely recyclable are no longer sold. If you can't recycle them, let's give some consideration to not actually putting them into the recycling ecosystem.

Bill 91 also doesn't recognize the importance of the hierarchy of the three Rs. We're going to push that. It should have just been included at the onset. As such, it doesn't give—and this is a key piece for businesses—priority to waste reduction, nor does it encourage higher orders of recycling that promote the best use of a material. For example, recycling a glass bottle into a glass bottle should surely be given priority over a glass bottle being crushed to use as roadbed, as I just outlined.

I just want to give you an example. There is a local company, the Brick Brewing Co., in Kitchener-Waterloo—a great local business in environmental and corporate leadership. They have actually expended additional money—I think it's \$150,000—in investment into a new glass bottle that is more resilient than your average bottle. The Beer Store has a great reputation for recycling. The incentive for people to return their beer bottles for a refund—I think 98% are returned, which is good. There is an incentive for the consumer. Brick Brewing has made this investment in this bottle. There's no reward for that kind of corporate leadership—a small tax break; an acknowledgment. They've gone out on a limb, and they're having some trouble, actually, dealing with the Beer Store because they're not recognized and because this bottle is of higher quality. So there are great inconsistencies around the province in how institutions and corporations deal with recycling. I think that we as the Legislature, and certainly when it gets to committee, should be exploring ways to reward those corporate citizens who actually go above and beyond, and have done so for many years. When this comes into play, I'm sure the government is going to try to establish some sort of new standard. Those companies that have actually done nothing for years will be seen as taking a leadership role because they're doing a little bit now because they have to, versus the companies like Brick Brewing who for years have been leaders.

The bill also fails to encourage reuse—such as refillable deposit return container systems—over recycling. A look across the country shows that provinces with deposit return systems have higher rates than those without, as has been explained with the LCBO and the Beer Store. Those are also big job creators, the return and reusing of those products, so why not look at expanding that to wine bottles, as the BlueGreen Alliance has called for? It would create green jobs—I know that almost has a bad connotation around here these days—and reduce waste, and even give a marked advantage to the Ontario wine industry.

There's going to be a by-election in this province—I don't know if anybody heard—in Niagara, and that's a huge—

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. It should be soon, because they are without representation. I think that when members leave their ridings, for whatever reason—health reasons, or maybe they’ve just had it; I can see it happening one day—the riding by-election should get precedence and happen sooner rather than later. This whole business of waiting six months—

Interjection.

1700

Ms. Catherine Fife: I know. I mean, come on. We’re ready to go; let’s get going.

Mr. John Vanthof: Does the ground freeze in Niagara in November for pounding signs?

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, the signs—we’ll figure something out with the signs.

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s frozen where I come from.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Back to the conversation, though. The conversation is around supporting the Ontario wine industry. Niagara is a key area, obviously a leader with internationally renowned wine, and if we as lawmakers could actually create some conditions that were rewarding and positive towards those companies that, as I said, are more than willing to be leaders in the recycling and reusing of products, then we should be part of that conversation as well.

There is also widespread concern about the lack of specifics in the bill about monitoring and enforcing a high standard of waste management and recycling services, and there are those in this province who say it cannot be left to producers to both meet recycling obligations, and certify and inspect recycling facilities. We’re going to hear from this industry, I’m sure, when this gets to committee, and I think that it’s going to get to committee fairly soon. But if recycling standards are weak, or they’re unenforced, then batteries, for instance, might simply be shipped to the US to be smelted, reducing the jobs and the economic opportunities that we have here in the province of Ontario.

As groups like the Canadian Environmental Law Association indicate in their submissions to the act, regulations need to be set by the government of Ontario to outline operation standards and provide definitions of recycling. You know, we have to be working with a level playing field here in the province of Ontario. We haven’t been for a long time, and a lot of the producers and a lot of businesses just want to know the rules. They want to know the framework that they’re operating in, and they’re willing to come to the table with creative solutions.

The bill on the whole, though—and this is something that bugs everyone, especially around Christmas or birthdays—seems to do little to directly promote reduced packaging, such as through working towards stronger regulations and working with other provinces and the federal government to set a timetable to reduce packaging. My son recently bought an iPod. You wouldn’t believe getting into this thing, and you wouldn’t believe the waste—it’s a small product—it was exorbitant, and there’s just no need for it.

In jurisdictions like Germany, they’ve put strict guidelines on product packaging, because it just ends up in the landfill, and as I have already said, landfills emit millions of tonnes of methane annually, a greenhouse gas significantly more potent than carbon dioxide. It’s just not a sustainable model that we’re dealing with here.

There’s also concern about whether the bill does enough to ensure that producers are fully responsible for the end management of their products. This is a long-standing issue.

The bill doesn’t seem to address the challenge and lack of uniformity of recycling services across Ontario. That’s the level playing field that I was talking about. The government strategy calls for a four-year phase-in of organics collection. That’s just too slow. Look at some of the municipalities across this province. They’ve said, “We’re not going to wait for the provincial government to get its act together; we’re just going to do it.” And what they’ve found is that the people in those municipalities are willing to be part of the solution. Even the education system has come along, and so what we have really is quite an amazing exercise in social change. You have children learning about organics and composting, and they’re going home and they are changing the culture and the patterns of their parents. They are saying, “No, no, that doesn’t go in the garbage; that goes into the compost. Where’s our compost?” There is definitely a disconnect that today’s generation has with their natural environment, and having a four-year phase-in of organics is just too slow. We need to be part of the solution on this, for sure.

So groups like the Canadian Environmental Law Association have raised the concern also about transferring enforcement to the authority. This is my last point on the authority. We certainly have seen a pattern of this government creating arm’s-length organizations to take care of things, to do the oversight, and I think that we have seen a pattern of that oversight not being thorough enough. It certainly wasn’t thorough enough to make sure that those people who are working for the Pan Am Games—they were expensing 91-cent coffees. I mean, clearly this is unacceptable; clearly, it’s indefensible. I don’t know how you pair it with a \$780,000 bonus for doing your job—

Mr. John Vanthof: That’s a lot of coffees.

Ms. Catherine Fife: That’s a lot of coffees. That’s actually a lot of jobs. It’s a lot of green jobs, and there are a lot of municipalities across the province that would welcome the support of this provincial government as they try to get into the 21st century on recycling, on reusing. This is important. It’s important for future generations. It’s important for us to show leadership on it.

The Conservatives have fallen into the same pattern, as they always do. You’re going to vote no instead of trying to make it stronger, even though the people of this province have sent a minority government to this place. I understand that some of it is distasteful. It certainly isn’t always easy; I’ll give you that. But what people expect us to do in this House is to create legislation which is going

to make this province stronger, create jobs and create a more just society. Making G91 a stronger piece of legislation will be one of our key acts in this Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you to the member for Waterloo for her very thoughtful intervention.

Mr. Speaker, this will create revenue to support municipal blue box programs, and that's very important. It will, in the aftermath of the party opposite downloading health and social services, because their way of dealing with provincial financial challenges was to make it the municipality's problem. We're not doing that; we're uploading that.

But I want to deal with two issues, quickly, in the minute and a half I have. One is, this is not going onto a broad tax base. As a matter of fact, this entire problem that the member from Waterloo quite correctly analyzed, which is to force things out of government, was done by the Conservatives. This is not our agency, and we lost control of the agenda and the pricing.

What the Minister of the Environment is doing is bringing this in-house, putting controls in place. The difference between user pay: If I choose to create a whole bunch of garbage and throw it out, why should my friend Jeff Leal pay for it? Why should these things be on the broad tax? We don't own a car in my household because we know the environmental consequences. There are people who need to drive a car; we don't. So that impact on the environment is hugely positive.

We're facing an environmental crisis, and I would like to try and understand the position of the party opposite. One third of all species on this planet will disappear between now and the year 2050. There is no more serious legacy we are leaving our children than a loss of biodiversity. Our bee populations are collapsing by a third to two thirds because of toxins like nicotine. The average Canadian bee, essential to farming, has 127—if we allow televisions and this crap to get into the environment, it is creating a toxic soup that is destroying and infecting our food supply. These kinds of measures are important first steps to protecting our children and leaving them a better legacy than the one that they're about to inherit if we don't change our ways.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to stand here and comment on the speech that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo just gave.

I was reading some comments that the member from Durham had the other day. One of the comments was there are two sections that deal entirely with setting out regulations. We're really not sure what those regulations are going to be, which causes the member to worry. It causes me to worry, and we wonder what they're hiding.

I heard some criticism from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo that the PCs are going to vote against this and that we always vote against things. Well, how many times does the third party have to be led down

the garden path? They've done it for the last 10 years, and seen the scandals that this government has been involved with, and yet you want to trust them—

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Prop them up.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: You prop them up all the time. I wonder if the member from Kitchener–Waterloo would maybe think about that a little bit.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I think that's something that's—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Careful. Everybody around there knows what happened. Careful.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Yes, that's a good word, "careful." I would suggest that the member from Perth–Wellington stay to the script about Bill 91 and not get into the partisan exchanges here.

1710

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes, Speaker, I'll get back to the subject. Thank you.

But anyways, I think that we have to, when we're looking at this bill—it's a bill that is very ambiguous. It doesn't set out goals. The people who are running this Waste Reduction Act, when they come to look at things, the government can just dream up a lot of stuff that—and it's not in this act, so it's very unsupportable.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane and make some comments on the remarks from the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. She touched on a lot of issues regarding this bill—some could be good and some very troublesome—and I'd like to add to a few of her comments.

Sometimes we discuss bills here, and you wonder, "Could this really be a bill? It's, like, four sentences." Well, this one is much different. There's a lot of stuff in this. Some of it deserves some more attention, and we've had some questions. One of the questions—small municipalities now who aren't involved in the recycling system because, quite frankly, they're too small, where do they fit in this? It's a legitimate concern. It's something that I don't think has been addressed and something that has got to be addressed.

The one thing that my honoured colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo did talk about which I would like to echo and perhaps amplify is the idea of transferring authority to another authority. In the end, we have no way of regulating that authority, once again, like TSSA. Does TSSA serve a role? Yes, but we have an awful hard time dealing with TSSA, from my perspective as a legislator. We don't want the same thing to happen with this one. We all can do the partisan shots about Ornge, but there is a lack of accountability and a lack of ability to drill down to the facts. Are we creating the same thing here? That question hasn't been answered, and that question has to be answered. That's one of the things that we're going to drill down on as this bill goes to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I was delighted to be here for 95% of the member of Kitchener–Waterloo’s speech. It’s interesting; I happen to know her family very well in Peterborough. I was at the East City Coffee Shop there a week ago, and rumour has it that her wonderful mother will be running for Peterborough city council next year. I welcome her—Sheila Wood—if she puts her name in the hat. I know that she is concerned about environmental issues with the city of Peterborough, the dog park etc. I think she would be a very good candidate. That’s some news from Peterborough for you today.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It doesn’t matter: She won’t be supporting you in the next provincial election.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, no, she’s actually a very good supporter of mine. We get along surprisingly well.

Bill 91—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Do you not consider the vote to be a secret ballot? Are you revealing someone’s voting intentions here in the Legislature?

Hon. Jeff Leal: The member from—I just want to—I’ll keep going, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 91 is a very important piece of legislation. When I had the opportunity to be at AMO in August, municipal leaders from right across the province of Ontario were talking about the initiative that’s being brought forward by Minister Bradley. In fact, they want to see opportunities I think which will be inherent in this bill to lift some of the costs from municipalities in the province of Ontario that they’ve had the burden of, in terms of recycling.

I’ve got to use another Peterborough example. At the Bensfort landfill site in Peterborough, we now take that methane gas and turn it into electricity. The Peterborough Utilities Services, which is owned by the city of Peterborough—a publicly owned utility—is one of the best in Ontario today. Just about six months ago, it got the generation station up and running—take the methane gas and turn it to electricity to power homes in Peterborough. I think that’s something the member from Kitchener–Waterloo touched upon.

I remember—it seems like a short time ago—packing for Christmas gifts. We’ve got to get rid of all that—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s always interesting to follow up on some of the comments. The member from Peterborough mentions my mother. She could be running for municipal. I haven’t convinced her to run for the NDP yet.

But the member from Perth–Wellington—this is the same sort of rhetoric that comes from the PC Party every time. He says that we’re propping them up. He knows, as their leader knows, that there won’t be a confidence motion until the spring. Quite honestly, if they want to do nothing until the spring, that is their choice. They could run on doing nothing.

Although they did do one thing. They did support one company when they supported the Liberals on Bill 74 last week. If the interests of one company are your interests, then that’s fine. What we are interested in on this side of the House, under the leadership of Andrea Horwath, is making sure that Bill 91 is actually effective. We are interested in making sure that the Liberals are held to account. We are interested in making sure that gas plants don’t get moved around like chess pieces. We are interested in making sure that the energy policy in this province actually suits the economy and strengthens the economy. We are interested in making sure that education is part of this waste diversion piece. We are interested in ensuring that people have access to home care and that the youth in this province have a fighting chance to get a job. These are the things that we value.

With the help and the support of the Financial Accountability Officer, we will make sure that this scandal-prone government and any other governments that are happening in the future fall under the purview of that office, so that we make sure that we are representing the people’s interests in this House, not the political interests of the parties in this House.

We are holding ourselves to that same level of leadership. We are going to make Bill 91 stronger; people expect us to do so. For a long time now, we have showed up to work, and we are getting results. It feels good.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It’s always a privilege to follow my good friend and colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo—who is celebrating her first anniversary with us in the House; congratulations to you—and to talk about a waste reduction framework for Ontario, an act called Bill 91.

All of us, when we go into our schools and we talk to kids, the kids aren’t talking to us about tax policy, and they’re not talking to us about regulatory frameworks, but one thing they are talking to us about is, “What are you doing to clean up the environment?” That’s one thing they do grasp, and that’s where this bill is going to start.

This bill has to start from what we’ve inherited, which was an act created in the 1990s. The act, created on the watch of the previous government—I’m not sure whether they were dragged into it, kicking and screaming, to actually do something, but we found that, whatever their intentions were at the time, and despite the government’s own best intentions to make this act work, it has kind of hit the wall. It can get up to a point where we can achieve some parts of waste diversion, but, very clearly, in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, we’re not getting there, and the act is lacking some teeth.

That’s one of the things that this bill proposes. When we talk about teeth in an act, here’s one thought that I would share, actually, with both my colleague from Nipissing and my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo: We are all leery about creating yet another arm’s-length bureaucracy, yet another agency that operates beyond our reach here in the Legislature and always seems to come

back and bite us. It's a proposal, and the member for Kitchener–Waterloo suggested that this is something that we should, in fact, thrash out in committee. On that part, I very much agree. There is a lot in here that I think has some merit and has some value but also a lot in here that is going to benefit not only from the exchange that happens in the House, but an exchange that happens in committee.

The proposed act would create a Waste Reduction Authority—that's the arm's-length agency that I talked about—that would see producers pay more for the blue box program. The functions of that arm's-length authority would be to monitor and enforce diversion among producers and businesses.

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To help consumers, one of the things we found is that what are intended to be fees designed to have producers of products ensure they are recycled are not designed to be flow-throughs, to be pass-throughs, to be add-ons. If you are a producer, you pay it. If you're a producer, the price that consumers see for your product in the store, on the shelf, in the marketplace is the price they pay. If there's an eco fee, that eco fee is absorbed by you before it gets to the consumer. That's something this bill is going to make very, very clear and is certainly going to correct. It's a flaw in the marketplace now that simply allows producers to take these fees, which are intended to be part of the cost of doing business, part of the price of the good by the time it hits the shelf. By the time it hits the shelf, no more eco fees, no more add-ons.

On average, Speaker, recycling generates about 10 times more jobs than disposal of products. For example, every 1,000 tonnes of recycled waste generates seven jobs. One of the areas here that Ontario needs to address is our waste diversion rate. It has been stalled for some years at about 25%. Elsewhere in the world, they've clearly made it work, and that's part of what this act is looking at: What are some of the business practices elsewhere in the world, and what do we have to do to up our game and to make it work?

To this end, the member for Kitchener–Waterloo has offered, I think, some very useful suggestions that, following this reading of the bill, should be taken into committee and form what comes back into the Legislature for debate and presumably final passage. This is the kind of bill that's going to give the government enough flexibility to keep parts of it as a work in process, because parts of it involve learning as you go.

Ontario has seen good progress made to increase recycling in the residential sector—in our homes. Almost half of household waste, 46%, is diverted from landfill. Not that long ago, that fraction was very, very much lower, and most of the stuff just got chucked in the garbage. Once it made it out to the curb, who cared? It was going somewhere. But now, nearly half of it gets recycled. Whether we're sorting out our bottles and cans and newspapers and plastics—whatever—we are managing, as households, to hit 50%. But when the same people who can manage to get half of their garbage recycled get

to work, it drops to around 13%. Instead of 50%, it's about one eighth. Very clearly, some of the practices we do at home and have learned to do instinctively, and teach our children to do, we just have to take to work with us.

There are some excellent actors out there. One of my occasional pleasures is to visit just a superb company in Meadowvale called Cyclone Manufacturing. Cyclone makes state-of-the-art airframe parts for all the leading aircraft makers. I was in Asia just before last Christmas for a signing between AIDC, of Taichung, in Taiwan, and Cyclone Manufacturing to do the tail assembly of the Bombardier Challenger series 300 jet. It makes Meadowvale one of Ontario's and North America's aerospace hubs.

One of the things you note about a lot of our leading-edge companies is that when they make the products, there's not much waste left over. The best companies have the best practices. Part of our challenge as a province is going to be to empower our proposed new agency to propagate those best practices from the firms that do it well to either the ones that don't do it at all or the ones that could do it a lot better.

What are we going to do with that 12 million tonnes of waste generated in the province each and every year? My colleague pointed out that 12 million tonnes is like filling up the Rogers Centre, the old SkyDome, three dozen times.

Waste reduction is actually not merely a job creator, but an investment attractor. It certainly worked in Europe. No one can call the products that come out of Germany, the world's leading export economy, uncompetitive. Germany has done this with some of the toughest environmental standards in the world. If the Germans can do it, so can we.

Companies that recycle, and recycle assiduously, use less energy. They produce fewer greenhouse gases. They have a lighter environmental impact than is caused by the extraction and use of raw materials, and of course, it greatly reduces the need for additional landfill capacity. As I said earlier, the single area where we've got the greatest potential to improve in Ontario is in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, and that would be manufacturing businesses, offices, retail, hospitals, schools, police forces and municipalities. Surprisingly, where we get nearly half of our household waste recycled, only an eighth in that sector—just one eighth—and we know that they can do better.

Some of the proposed waste reduction framework would involve doing some of the following: increasing the recycling of waste and, in fact, stimulating the recycling of waste. One of the key ways to do that, that everywhere else in the world that has been successful with recycling has found, is to make individual producers responsible for the entire life cycle of their product, all the way through to when your product is used, consumed, returned, destroyed and recycled. That becomes your responsibility as the producer. As the producer, then you start to think to yourself, "Is my packaging appropriate?

Is my packaging recyclable? How much stuff that I use goes into landfill?"

I'm going back to Cyclone Manufacturing. Using a very high-pressure jet of water, what they're able to do is produce airframe parts without a single weld or a single rivet. That high-pressure jet of water will take a block or a sheet of aluminum and cut it or shape it or etch it to precise tolerances so that that part can be incorporated into an airframe. They don't waste any aluminum. All of their water is recycled. All of their aluminum is recycled. All of their paper packaging and their wood is recycled, and their products leave the factory headed for Embraer in Brazil, AIDC in Taiwan, Bombardier in Montreal and so on and so forth. They're all packaged up in very recyclable wood and using recycled paper.

What we've got to do is to provide consumers convenient and accessible diversion services. We've got to keep raising that bar for consumers as well. We've got to get above the nearly half of waste that's recycled and get up more toward developed world standards.

In so doing, part of our challenge is to shift the costs of diversion away from the municipal tax base and away from municipal taxpayers to the producers of the product from which the waste is derived. To have the cost of waste disposal be borne by the property tax simply uses the property tax for something it was never designed to do. However, everywhere in the world, producers are required to deal with the by-products and the waste from the processes that they use to make their products, and nobody better than the producer knows how to take their product back, take it apart, if necessary, and recycle everything in it. Indeed, the producer can probably use nearly all of the raw materials of returned parts to be melted down, re-machined, ground up or whatever, in order to be able to produce new products.

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The other thing that this act seeks to do is to protect the consumers from the surprise when you get the eco fee at the cash register. The eco fee was never intended to be passed through to the consumer at the cash register. The eco fee is a cost of doing business for the producer. It isn't intended that the producer take the money and run, and flow the eco fee through to the poor buyer at the store. What this bill does is provide very strong oversight, and it provides compliance mechanisms to ensure that that outcome is met.

Let's talk about that waste reduction framework. It would have two components. Component number one is the Waste Reduction Act, which is what we're talking about, which replaces the old Waste Diversion Act. I almost feel sorry that my colleagues across in the Conservatives are being nostalgic about an act they may have written—and let's give them the benefit of the doubt. They may have written it in good faith, nearly 20 years ago, designed to do something that was applicable nearly 20 years ago, but the world has moved on. Now it's time to let go of an act that was written for the 1990s for a business climate in the 1990s and to embrace an act that was written in the 21st century for a business climate in the 21st century.

The second part is a waste reduction strategy that's going to provide a blueprint for increasing diversion and the economic and environmental benefits of diverting all of this material from landfill. The last thing that we want to keep doing is using perfectly good land in what is admittedly the second-largest land mass on earth—in Canada here—but we shouldn't be digging holes to pour in junk, to pour in things that could be recycled, to pour in things that contain valuable raw materials, just because nobody has got a structure to be able to extract the raw materials.

One of the problems that they're having in a lot of the developing world in Asia is that of the free rider, the people who say, "For a fee, don't worry about it. I'll pick up all of your waste material," particularly in electronics, where you've got, in addition to valuable materials—some silver; trace amounts of gold—some real nasties like lead and cadmium, which are terribly poisonous. They're often just dumped in rivers, and what they end up with is rivers that are devoid of fish, because the electronic waste that is just dumped in there is broken down by the water and ends up killing all the living things in that body of water. Sooner or later, many of those developing countries in Asia will be facing the cleanup bill for dredging their rivers, scooping all of this stuff out and fixing it up.

I can remember being in Havana a number of years ago and talking with the managers of Havana harbour. Cuba is not a wealthy country. Think of Cuba this way—and I'll explain it in a way that my constituents in western Mississauga can understand. Cuba, with a population of 11.5 million, compares favourably with Ontario, with a population of 13 million, but Cuba would be like running all of the province of Ontario on only the money generated by Mississauga and Brampton. When Cuba spends money, they do it very carefully, and one of their problems was, after centuries of neglect and pollution, cleaning up Havana harbour.

What Cuba decided to do was, instead of dredging Havana harbour, to take some of the contaminated areas and gently cover it over in layers and layers of silt, allowing relatively clean silt to push down the layers that were polluted over time. To their pleasant surprise, actually the strategy was working for them. They said, "It isn't because it's the best way or even the only way, but it was the way we can afford and it was a way that actually achieves our end result."

One of the lessons that we can draw from that is that not only are there best practices everywhere in the world that we can emulate and adapt but, as Canadians, we can think of ways that are all unique to us that we can take and teach the rest of the world.

Let's talk about this Waste Reduction Act in my final minutes. The intent is to transform Waste Diversion Ontario into the new Waste Reduction Authority, and this is the one that all three parties are looking at and thinking to themselves—including the government—"We want to be awfully careful if we create yet another arm's-length body, because it's those arm's-length bodies that come

back to bite us.” Even looking at this in the bill, I’m thinking to myself, “Okay, it’s in the bill. We’ll get the bill to committee, but convince me.”

Some of the things that this authority would do: It would provide for oversight and compliance with the proposed producer responsibility regime and integrated pricing provisions in the proposed Waste Reduction Act, and it would continue to oversee existing waste diversion programs until they get transitioned to the new framework. As well, this authority would engage in activities that are set out in an operating agreement with the minister. The authority would have a number of key functions, which include—but they’re not limited to this—receiving and storing information from producers and intermediaries. You cannot make an intelligent decision unless you’ve got good information. So one of the key things that this authority would do would be to capture, store and organize good information to make sure that you can make an intelligent decision out of good information.

The authority would assess the performance of producers’ actions. If you don’t know what the score is, how can you up your game? That’s what this would do. It would take graduated compliance and enforcement action against individual producers and intermediaries who perform poorly, known in the vernacular as the free riders: “I’ll gain an economic advantage over you, because you, who will faithfully comply with the regime and do your best to recycle your products—I’m just going to undercut you by simply surreptitiously chucking them.”

Now, that’s an overview of some of the things that this act can do, and I’m looking forward to hearing feedback in some of the questions and comments. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I concur with the member from Mississauga–Streetsville that we should be concerned about setting up an arm’s-length agency. He’s right. So is the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane concerned about setting up an agency at arm’s length, because in the past, when government has done this, it has come back to bite us, to quote the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. We have a history of having bad experiences with arm’s-length agencies that are not accountable, where there is not oversight, and this bill reinforces that there will be lack of oversight and accountability because, by definition, a minister can’t touch an arm’s-length agency. By definition, when the act says the freedom-of-information act will not apply to this Bill 91, that takes away an avenue of oversight and accountability, and when it says that even the Auditor General cannot be approached to do an audit unless the minister agrees to it, again, we have a whole bunch of red flags there that we are seeing, we are cautious about, leery about, and I think we should not do this.

This bill should be restructured so that it has a structure that provides the accountability and oversight that all three parties are concerned about, that’s been

expressed here this afternoon in a few short speeches. Of course, with the history of other organizations like the OSPCA, which I’ve mentioned before, where corruption has absolutely happened, where they can collect money, they’re at arm’s length, there is no oversight and no accountability, we just don’t want to go there again.

It’s very easily fixed. I think we just put the responsibility with the Ministry of the Environment, where the freedom-of-information act will apply, where the minister does have power and authority of oversight, and we can go to the Ombudsman or we can go to the Auditor General to have oversight if there are problems perceived there, and we have more direct control over what happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just want to say, the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills says that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville is right about admitting that with arm’s-length agencies, there’s not a good track record. But that’s good; it’s good that he’s admitting it, because when you understand that you have a problem, then you can go about fixing it. If we could just get those executives on the Pan Am committee to actually rein in their spending and maybe even just do the job that they were paid to do for \$400,000, that would be refreshing. That would rebuild trust.

To the comments, though, from the member from Mississauga–Streetsville: The one thing I just want to say that is sort of missed in the general comments is that we really are not talking about the economic benefits of this bill. Every thousand tonnes of materials diverted generates 7.3 full-time equivalent jobs, \$711,000 in GDP and \$360,000 in wages. The economic benefits are four times greater than the net cost to recycle.

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So we really do have to actually get this right, and that’s what our focus will be. Our focus in committee will be to make sure that the economic value is realized, to ensure that the environment truly is protected, to make sure that this agency that this government seems so dead set on bringing into play—we’re going to fight to actually have the government just do its job around oversight. Why create another agency? The track record is not good, right?

I think we have some solid arguments for the ministry responsible just to have those measures and those tools in place to do oversight in a responsible way. That’s where we’re going to focus our energy. We’re still willing to do the work because it’s an important issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I’d just like to read a couple of sections from the Coalition for Effective Waste Reduction in Ontario. This is to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment. It’s from the executive summary:

“Producers respect and value the critical work of our municipal partners in waste reduction, particularly through the development and operation of blue box col-

lection programs. Municipalities will continue to play important roles in waste reduction, and we look forward to renewed and robust partnerships. We believe strongly, however, that the flexibility to design these partnerships within an open and competitive market place is essential." I think we all agree on that. "The legitimate concerns of municipalities in areas such as continuity of services to residents and environmental protection can be addressed through standards and regulations."

It goes on further, "A more streamlined Waste Reduction Act, focused on principles of producer responsibility and addressing the concerns highlighted in our submission, could provide a legislative framework to enable the development of appropriate producer responsibility programs across Ontario. Bill 91 already anticipates that many critical issues such as targets and standards will be implemented through regulations. We share a concern along with other stakeholders regarding the critical need for fair, meaningful and transparent consultations as part of the process of drafting regulations."

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville, in his presentation, showed where we can go and the dollars we can save, and putting the producer responsibility is going to incent them to reduce waste and improve all of the 3Rs that we're looking to improve on.

I think we're going in the right direction. If the three parties work together, we can come out with a good solution for waste reduction in Ontario that we all seek. That is our objective, to make sure that we protect the environment and at a most reasonable cost.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: A pleasure to join the debate here for a couple of minutes on the comments of the member from Mississauga—Streetsville—although I agree more with the member for Kitchener—Waterloo and my colleague from Carleton—Mississippi Mills.

When I first heard the words that the Liberals had brought out a Waste Reduction Act, a new waste reduction bill, I was so hopeful it had something to do with the way they've governed this province in general over the past 10 years, where we've seen deficits climb to record levels and the debt of Ontario double under the term of this government. I thought, "Oh, my goodness, waste reduction, that's exactly what we need here in the province of Ontario." But then I found out, no. You know what it's about? It's a bill that is designed to deflect the critical eye away from the abject failure that they have been when it comes to reducing waste and diverting waste.

When they were elected in 2003, they promised, and they reiterated as government, that they would have a 60% diversion rate from landfills by 2010. Speaker, the diversion rate in Ontario has actually dropped to 26% under this government. That is how much they have failed, how poorly they have done. So they're desperate. They're coming out with an act—and by the way, the administration of this act, you have to get to page 20 of this bill before you get beyond the establishing of the

authority. This is how broad, the octopus of an agency that it's going to be. It's going to be a mess. Think about all of the government's arm's-length agencies that have been disasters. This will be another one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Mississauga—Streetsville has two minutes.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It has been instructive to hear the comments of my colleagues.

To the member for Carleton—Mississippi Mills: I'm afraid he would dismiss out of hand what may be the only way to ensure that people do what they agree to do. So I can't agree with him on this. Voluntary standards mean no standards at all. Quite frankly, toothless enforcement records on non-compliance just give rise to non-compliance and anarchy.

To my colleague from Kitchener—Waterloo: Perhaps such an arm's-length agency simply needs good, old-fashioned political oversight. We've seen recently in our committee work that elected members can still terrify bureaucrats and arm's-length executives. I found that on the whole, her comments were very helpful and very constructive.

My colleague from Ottawa—Orléans, who is also celebrating 10 years as an elected member, has had a distinguished career as a professional engineer and joins our government caucus as one of a number of members with a background in science. For example, the Minister of Research and Innovation and I both have backgrounds in physics, and we have not one or two but three medical doctors in the caucus. I think one of the key things here is to have science minds providing input into a bill that's all about applying science to business.

Finally, my colleague and friend from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, who is also celebrating 10 years as an elected member, is a good man and a fine singer, but I have to respectfully disagree with him on this. I think he should just let go of a bill that dates back to the 1990s and step into the 21st century.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: When I saw that I would be debating the Waste Reduction Act, I was really excited: It was about time that we talk about reducing some of the waste around here. Sadly, this bill is not about getting rid of the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals, but that's another story for another time. Instead, this bill seeks to radically alter the landscape of waste reduction in this province. At the end of the day, they recycle a lot of tired Liberal ideas.

Bill 91 would technically repeal the Waste Diversion Act. However, it would continue every recycling program, agency and fee created under it in a section called "Existing Waste Diversion Programs and Existing Industry Funding Organizations." It would ignore the calls of ordinary Ontarians who are saying enough is enough when it comes to eco fees.

This bill leaves many important questions unanswered. To start, there are no cost estimates. There's no regulatory impact assessment. What we do have is a bill

that was perhaps hastily put together so that the government could at least appear to take action on the file. Without knowing how much it would end up costing the province or what potential impacts the legislation could have, it's difficult to give it our support.

Our critic rightly pointed out that it is not good enough to come into the Legislature with a bill that has less substance than a white paper and claim that it will dramatically change waste reduction in Ontario.

I'd like to commend our environment critic, the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, for bringing eco fees into the spotlight over the past year. The public got angry about the fees, and the issue received some attention in the media. It also received some local attention in the Chatham-Kent-Essex area as well, Mr. Speaker. His call to scrap eco fees has been heard around the province but has somehow not been heard by this Liberal government.

Given the reaction from the public and media toward eco fees, I was optimistic that the Minister of the Environment would take the opportunity to reduce or scrap these unpopular fees. We took the time to consult with stakeholders and Ontarians on this issue; Speaker, they don't like them.

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Who did the government consult with? Instead of listening to the public, who were rightly angered each time they looked at their receipts, they simply hid the eco fees even more. They swept them under the rug. The cost will be exactly the same to consumers at the end of the day. The Liberal government is still happy to take your money with a fee and then tax the higher amount; they just don't want you to know about it. Under the current scheme, at least people can see the eco fees right there on their receipt and voice their disagreement with them.

For the folks watching at home, I'd like to take a minute to read a list of products subject to eco fees into the record. I only have 20 minutes, so please understand that I won't be able to include them all, but here are a few of them: computer monitors—the eco fee charged, \$12.25; displays that are between 29 inches and 45 inches, \$39.50; desktop printing, copying and multi-function devices, \$10.35. And get this one, Speaker: floor-standing printing and copying devices, \$173.75. And the list goes on.

Each of these items is subject to a tax on a tax. The Liberals have quietly collected over \$100 million in the past five years since Dalton McGuinty initially dreamt up eco taxes.

Back in 2009, the Liberals introduced a new round of eco taxes, this time for their e-waste program that was established under another Liberal regulation for waste electrical and electronic equipment. With this plan, the Liberals not only introduced eco taxes on everything from iPods to TVs to computers and printers; they also set up a new unaccountable recycling cartel called the Ontario Electronic Stewardship, or OES. Under this system, OES takes money from consumers through mandatory eco fees and hands it out to a select group of

recycling companies that take the material away and process it.

What exactly are the criteria to be selected as one of those companies? How does one get to be hand-picked by the Liberals to get a monopoly on recycling in Ontario? Who knows? This regime completely stifles competition, all but guaranteeing a poor value on the dollar for taxpayers in Ontario. At the same time, it also reduces innovation.

Not surprisingly, the stewardship did not work. Just last year, the Ontario Electronic Stewardship was in a dire financial situation. Instead of taking immediate action to balance the books, eco taxes were raised to cover for yet another case of fiscal mismanagement.

If, at first, you don't succeed, tax, tax again. Under this government we've seen a troubling trend of simply reaching back into the pockets of taxpayers when a program does not get the job done. This reminds me of a bumper sticker I saw recently that said, "I Owe, I Owe, It's Off to Work I Go."

The Minister of the Environment has claimed that this bill will scrap the Ontario Tire Stewardship and the Ontario Electronic Stewardship. We feel that this claim is disingenuous. This bill would see every recycling program, every agency and every fee continue on. Perhaps some of the names would change, but that's it.

Bill 91 gives the minister the option to eventually get rid of eco fees if he wishes. However, the minister stated at a press conference in June that it could take five years to wind down the eco tax programs, if they decide to get rid of them at all.

The Ontario PCs have a better option. We say, scrap them today.

The one particular issue that hits close to home for the folks in this great riding of Chatham-Kent-Essex is the tire tax. This particular fee skyrocketed by 2,000% back in April, which wreaked havoc on local farmers. I spoke with the president of the Chatham-Kent Christian Farmers' Association. Jacques Tetreault and I were discussing the issues that were impacting farmers. One of the biggest issues, he told me back then, was that these tire taxes were going up and up and up. Just to give you an indication, we talked about the John Deere 9300 tractor tires. New total fees: \$729. The previous fee was only \$61. That's a 1,200% increase. Or how about John Deere 9770 Combine tires? New total fees: \$1,645. The previous fees were only \$91. That's an 1,800% increase. I guess this Liberal government, who claim to be friends of rural Ontario since they have a part-time Minister of Agriculture, have to once again find ways to pay for their boondoggle \$1.1-billion gas plant scandals on the backs of farmers; the ones who, in fact, feed cities.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, eco fees are incredibly unpopular in my riding, and I cannot support their continuation, and the people of Chatham-Kent-Essex won't stand for it.

Bill 91 does more than continue the Liberal eco tax scheme. The bill also seeks to get rid of Waste Diversion Ontario, which by all accounts is an unaccountable or-

ganization. This sounds great at first, but the government simply wants to rename it the Waste Reduction Authority and give it even more power.

How exactly would this new authority work? Well, similar to the College of Trades, this authority would have the power to set and collect fees or taxes to fund its operations. The agency would be headed up by a registrar, who would then appoint deputies to fine producers to fund the operation of the authority, through taxes. Are you still following? It gets even better. Then the registrar would assemble an army of inspectors to send across Ontario to round up fines and funnel them all back into the Waste Reduction Authority. All of this, by the way, would be going on with zero accountability to the public. The authority is disconnected from Parliament, not subject to the freedom-of-information act and can only be reviewed by the Auditor General, if the minister happens to feel it's necessary.

As the scandals surrounding the Liberal government begin to pile up, we cannot even begin to consider reducing accountability for an unnecessary agency. If there's one thing this Liberal government is good at—other than wasting billions of taxpayers' dollars in a laundry list of scandals—it's forming redundant agencies.

At the end of the day, this bill ignores two main demands of the PC Party for waste reduction policy. This bill does not remove eco taxes nor does it eliminate useless bureaucracy. In fact, the bill opens the door to increased costs, for both individuals and companies, in the form of new taxes or fees. Beyond that, it would actually increase bureaucracy—bigger government, with more taxing power and less accountability.

This is truly a scary time for the taxpayers of Ontario. Waste Diversion Ontario has time and time again broken the trust of taxpayers across the province. Their ongoing failure should not be rewarded with a significantly larger budget and increased power.

As I wrap up, I would like to highlight our party's major concerns with this piece of legislation. First, it is unacceptable to the members on this side of the House to increase the funding and authority of Waste Diversion Ontario. Slapping a new name on the sign on the door is not enough. We should be reducing the size and cost of government to ensure our vital services are there when we need them.

Secondly, intermediary sections of this bill form an unnecessary interference in the marketplace that will end up driving up costs. The minister stated in his remarks that this bill seeks to "unleash the innovative energies of competition in the marketplace." Upon closer inspection, we see that this is not the case. These intermediary sections of the bill will hurt the market, limit competition and stifle innovation. They will do more harm than good, and should be removed from the bill.

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Thirdly, sections 44 and 45 will not be supported by our party. These sections pit municipalities against producers instead of bringing them to the table to find a

solution that works for all sides. As the bill reads today, the waste authority would be permitted to impose new taxes and determine how much business will have to pay for the blue box program. We are concerned that this will only serve to entrench companies and municipalities instead of promoting co-operation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We will continue another time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

ABORIGINAL LAND DISPUTE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given on October 3, 2013, by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or the parliamentary assistant may reply for five minutes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It was around July 11 or 12 of this year that it became known that the illegal burger shack on MTO property outside Caledonia was operating without approvals from the health unit, and was apparently operating without zoning, fire code and building code approvals from Haldimand county. It has been in the court, most recently last Thursday.

My first question is, who asked for the contempt of court charge to be dropped against the Minister of Infrastructure? How did that happen? The Ontario government has been involved with the illegal use of this provincial MTO property for a number of years now because of the illegal smoke shack—for example, attempts to construct a second entrance directly to provincial Highway 6.

My question is, has the Ontario government granted any approvals to these two illegal businesses, or does silence or turning a blind eye mean consent? Question: When will you dismantle and remove these two illegal structures? They shouldn't even be there.

Another question is, has there been federal government involvement? We know that the federal government has indicated, on a number of occasions, that there is no valid land claim on any of the property adjacent to Highway 6. Does the provincial government not agree with that statement, nor with similar findings in the courts?

Why are there different sets of rules for the owners and operators of the smoke shack and the burger shack compared to other businesses in town, businesses that have to compete with these tax-free enterprises? Do the rules vary depending on whether such businesses are on provincial land compared to private land, compared to reserve land, or do all of the rules apply but are not enforced because of perhaps intimidation, edicts from on high or the discretion of the officers? I know there may

not be time to answer all of these questions, so I formally request some written responses.

People do ask me, who gives the right for activists on MTO property to breach the law, including these public health codes and tobacco legislation? It's bad for business. It's bad for tourism. This whole mess is right at the southern entrance to town. It's bad for the credibility of government at the municipal, provincial and federal level. Why the abdication of responsibility?

Going back to July 12, the Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit inspectors, accompanied by OPP, served a closure order on this burger shack. Haldimand county public works staff assisted in installing a sign at the driveway. After they left, the sign was removed by the occupiers. When nothing changed, the medical officer of health sought and was successful in receiving a cease and desist order on July 22. That order also names the Minister of Infrastructure, who, I note, did not step aside while this matter was before the court.

Need I remind anyone here of the standards for food handling? We know of the church groups and the new regulations that meant that they could no longer bake pies at home kitchens that weren't inspected. Also, there was no hesitation in shutting down food booths at the CNE. Why is Haldimand county any different?

Last Thursday, the matter went before a judge in Brantford. The contempt of court charge against the Minister of Infrastructure was put aside. The minister was also removed from the injunction. Again, who asked that the contempt charge be dropped? People are asking me, why was the minister removed from the injunction?

This doesn't mean the government is off the hook. Last Thursday, the government of Ontario was added to the list of respondents in this case, and it could be back before a court if the owner does not make improvements. Again, should the government not be responsible? Why is the government not responsible for what occurs on its own property?

If I had more time, I would talk a bit more about smoke shacks and so many other perceived injustices.

The bottom line, Speaker, is that people wonder why it has come to this: a number of illegal shacks, the burned-out tractor trailer, dismantled power towers. Public health rules, zoning and building permits are the issues at present. The bottom line is that these buildings should never have been built. The question is, when will this government remove them?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has five minutes.

Hon. David Zimmer: I note this is a late show, and the reason given is because the member opposite was dissatisfied with my answer to his question posed last Thursday. I have to say that after I received the notice that he was dissatisfied, I went and made arrangements to watch the exchange again, his question and my answer, and I have to say I was perfectly satisfied with the answer.

But anyway, be that as it may, let me say to the member again, as I did last Thursday, that the issue of the un-

licensed food stand is currently before the courts. It was before the court last Thursday, the Superior Court in Brantford.

I found out that what happened on Thursday in the court proceedings was that there was an indication from the parties to the presiding judge that they were making some progress in trying to resolve the issue. Accordingly, the judge, and rightly so, adjourned the matter to a later date some time at the end of this month, the end of October. So I'm not going to comment on that case; it is still before the courts.

I would, however, like to correct the record and make it quite clear that there is no contempt order being sought against the Minister of Infrastructure. I can tell you that, on September 27, 2013, on the consent of all the parties, the court set aside the Superior Court injunction against the minister—and I want to stress the consent of all of the parties to that proceedings.

Let me just say without commenting in any way on the case before the court, just to give you some other information on things that are happening over at Six Nations with regard to various issues over there, that it's clear that these issues and a host of other issues that the member has referenced run much deeper. Many of them are beyond Ontario's power to address alone.

Participation from the federal government is required in order to resolve a number of these issues underlying the Six Nations claims. Negotiations at the main table have been on pause since October 2009. However, our government remains hopeful that Canada will return to the negotiating table. It's the federal government that has been absent from the negotiations. The claims brought forward by the Six Nations can be resolved in a way that benefits the members of all communities involved if we can get all levels of government back at the table.

In the meantime, Ontario continues to work with Six Nations, the surrounding municipalities, Brantford and others, Haldimand and the development community to find some practical ways of moving forward with the unresolved claims by Six Nations. This includes strengthening working relationships and fostering community reconciliation.

In the midst of this, it's important that we do not lose sight of the significant progress Ontario is making in its relationship with First Nations. We are acting upon the recommendations of the Ipperwash inquiry in the policies and programs that we are developing.

We are continuing to resolve claims by First Nations across this province. We are fostering community reconciliation. We are investing in people and infrastructure, whether it's building consultation capacity through our New Relationship Fund or supporting community and business centre development through our Aboriginal Community Capital Grants Program.

We are investing in health care, education and other vital social programs, and we are taking a stand on social issues that are of critical importance to the aboriginal communities.

In conclusion, our government is committed to working with First Nations partners and all levels of government to overcome challenges and find new opportunities. We've created jobs, improved educational outcomes and promoted economic sustainability for First Nations. Our commitment to improving the quality of life of First Nations communities in Ontario is tireless.

I just want to circle back now to my first comment. The technical answer, the proper answer to the member's

question, is that the question that he raised and he asked about was dealing with matters that are before the Superior Court. They were before the Superior Court last Thursday. The matter has been adjourned. It's coming up in late October. It's still before the courts, and I'm not prepared to comment on that particular proceeding.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1811.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
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Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
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Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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Garfield Dunlop, Cindy Forster
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sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Président: Vacant

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

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MEMBERS' STATEMENTS / DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS

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Homelessness

Ms. Peggy Sattler	3607
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South-East Ottawa Community Health Centre

Mr. John Fraser	3607
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Community Living Kincardine and District

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	3608
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Bicycle safety

Mr. Jonah Schein	3608
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École Notre-Dame-des-Champs

M. Phil McNeely	3608
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of Ontario**

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**Assemblée législative
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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

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Thursday 10 October 2013

Jeudi 10 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTRONIC PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS SUR LA SANTÉ FIGURANT DANS UN DOSSIER DE SANTÉ ÉLECTRONIQUE

Mr. Milloy, on behalf of Ms. Matthews, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records / *Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne les dossiers de santé électroniques.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy?

Hon. John Milloy: At the outset, I want to just point out that I'll be speaking only for a brief moment and then turning it over to the Minister of Health as well as the minister's parliamentary assistant, the member from Oak Ridges—Markham.

The bill, and I know the minister will go into some detail, obviously deals with the issue of electronic health records. I can certainly say, from my experience as an MPP, I have had the opportunity to work with local physicians, with hospitals, with health care providers and to attend numerous demonstrations of the strides that we are making in terms of electronic health records, in terms of the dollars that it's saving in making sure that we don't have to duplicate tests, but more importantly, the way in which it's benefiting patient care in that physicians and health care providers have access to a whole history, as I mentioned, of tests, of pharmaceuticals a person is taking, of their whole medical history, which helps them provide better care, faster care—and as I say, Mr. Speaker, you always have to look at the whole issue of efficiency and cost. It means that we don't duplicate tests, it means that we're able to make the best decisions at that moment and in the best interests of the patient.

So I look forward to the debate on this bill. I think it's a very important bill in establishing a framework around this very important headway that we're making in terms of health care. With that, I will turn it over to the Minister of Health.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the Legislature today to speak to the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2013, that I introduced on May 29, 2013. This legislation, if passed, would protect the personal health information of patients to ensure that their electronic health records can be safely and securely shared by health providers within a patient's circle of care. The proposed legislation would amend the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, known as PHIPA, the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

Until now, our existing privacy laws have done a great job of protecting patient privacy. But as technology progresses and we enable the sharing of electronic health records between health providers in a patient's circle of care, we need new rules in place to further safeguard patients' privacy. I think we can all agree that patients have a right to have their privacy protected when it comes to their personal health information. This includes the right to choose what information may be shared with other providers.

To give effect to these rights and support patient privacy, we need rigorous privacy rules in place for patient records. That's what these proposed amendments seek to achieve. They are as much about giving patients greater control over how and with whom their electronic medical histories are shared as they are about enabling providers to better work together on a shared system of electronic health.

Mr. Speaker, comprehensive consultations about this proposed legislation were held with more than 50 health system organizations, and the proposed legislation was developed in close collaboration with our health care partners, including eHealth Ontario, Ontario's nursing and medical associations, and our health professional regulatory colleges. But most importantly, we relied on the advice of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We could not have developed this important legislation without the crucial and valued input of her and her office. I am very pleased to say that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has expressed her full support for the proposed amendments on the grounds that they will support shared electronic health record development, while also protecting patients' personal privacy.

The proposed Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act would:

—establish privacy and security requirements for the shared electronic health record;

- clarify the authority under which health information custodians may collect, use and disclose personal health information in the electronic health record;

- establish a committee to advise the minister on electronic health record-related matters;

- establish rules protecting an individual's right to make a consent directive to mask their personal health information; and

- describe limited occasions for which consent overrides may be permissible.

These proposed amendments would, if passed, also seek to double the existing penalties for privacy violations for those responsible for handling personal health information.

The amendments to the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, if passed, would allow prescribers to use electronic means to provide an instruction on a prescription, which will help enable electronic prescribing.

Mr. Speaker, technological advances have resulted in better quality care and have added greater value to our system through productivity gains. They have also reduced wait times, given providers better diagnostic tools that are saving lives and are helping patients better manage their own health and well-being.

Virtual health initiatives are eliminating the barrier of distance, increasing access to care, and electronic health records are enabling a more patient-centred system. Each day, more and more clinicians are able to share lab, diagnostic and other patient information through projects like hospital reporting systems, which allow community-based physicians to view reports on patients who have been discharged from hospital.

The Ontario laboratories information system, or OLIS, which collects information from the province's community, hospital and public health labs to create a centralized record of a patient's lab test results, can be accessed by authorized providers across the province. And the emergency neurosurgery image transfer system, or ENITS, is ensuring that head trauma patients and those with other neurological disorders, regardless of where they are in the province, have access to the guidance and expertise of a neurosurgeon 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

9910

We're also advancing virtual health initiatives like telemedicine, which allows providers to use video conferencing and other advanced information and communication technologies to provide care to Ontario's widely dispersed population, and e-consultation, which will make it easier for providers to communicate with each other and with their patients.

Speaker, these amendments, if passed, would enable our government to fulfill our commitment to provide a safe and secure electronic health record for all the people of Ontario by 2015, while at the same time protecting the privacy of their personal health information. I'm pleased to say that we are on track to reach that goal. Our work will continue beyond 2015 to better support provincial transformation priorities, improve the quality and safety of patient care and leverage further efficiencies in the

health care system. Secure, shared electronic health records that protect the privacy of every patient's personal health information are a key driver of health system transformation. Electronic health records are known to improve the quality, safety and integration of patient care, as well as convenience for patients.

Electronic health records will also play an important role in community health links, which were created to provide better, more coordinated care to meet the needs of our most complex patients, many of them seniors. These are patients in our health care system who typically need the most from our health care spending. They use the system most frequently, yet their conditions aren't improving. In fact, these high users of the system, who account for around 5% of our patient population, consume more than two thirds of our health care dollars.

Community health links are a truly innovative model of care, one that will improve patient outcomes, first for our most complex patients, but eventually extended beyond that. Community health links are the next step in the transformation of Ontario's health system and flow naturally from other recent reforms. Health links strengthen the link between all of the health care providers in a given geographic area who are providing care to individuals with high needs.

That network of linked health care providers works as a team to collectively manage the needs of those patients with the greatest needs, in partnership with the patient, the family and the community, so they move smoothly through the system. In addition, health links can potentially have an enormous impact on our health care costs by making the care of multiple chronic patients, many of them seniors, more efficient as well as more effective. Health links will help us improve care and will lead to better use of taxpayer dollars.

The electronic sharing of information by health link partners will support better coordination and will bring better value by saving time and reducing duplication. Our community health links will seek to leverage provincial e-health initiatives to support more effective, high-quality care by enabling the consistent maintenance and sharing of a patient's record. They will enable effective, timely communication and collaboration within the patient's circle of care and between the provider and the patient, and they will enable the removal of physical barriers to care delivery through the virtualization of care.

Key to our efforts to support community health links with technology is the planned development of a care coordination tool which will meet the health links core business requirements for enabling care coordination.

Throughout the health care system, with the help of electronic health records, health care providers are able to make better clinical decisions by having complete and up-to-date patient information literally at their fingertips. The risk of negative drug events is being reduced thanks to more complete personal health information available to a provider for treatment. And the health care system itself, along with Ontario taxpayers, is benefiting through

evidence-based funding, planning, delivery and monitoring by the ministry.

In order for electronic health records to realize their full potential, a wide variety of complex health information systems must be connected to each other. Care providers must be able to electronically share patient data for patients to move seamlessly through various parts of the health care system, for example, from a checkup to a lab result to a hospital procedure to rehabilitation.

Ontario's health care system is highly complex and geographically widespread. We have the largest population of any province and the second-largest land area. There's no doubt that linking electronic health systems within the province will support efficient, timely and high-quality patient care.

Electronic health care is critical if we are to improve access to quality patient care and foster greater innovation across our province. It will help us transform our health care system from using mostly paper-based records to fast and efficient electronic sharing of data among authorized health care providers anywhere in the province. But being fast and efficient is only part of the picture. Electronic sharing of information must also be secure, and it must be designed in a way to protect the patient's privacy. Electronic health records contain information from a variety of health care providers, including lab results, medication history and information from the electronic medical records used by physicians and nurse practitioners.

Eventually, shared electronic health records will include data from hospital information systems, community care clinics and other providers as well; in other words, from all the health care settings and health care professionals involved in a person's circle of care. Over time, these electronic health records would be connected to each and every patient across Ontario. They would be their guide to their personal health and well-being, connecting all of their health providers under one system of care. The result will have a positive impact on health care delivery and on outcomes.

Over 10,000 Ontario providers, providing health care for two out of three Ontarians, have or are in the process of implementing electronic health records. We need to take the next step in integrating our health care system. We need to ensure that the personal health information of every patient is safe, secure and private. These proposed amendments would, if passed, support better information sharing and coordination among all the health care providers and organizations a patient may come into contact with, while protecting each patient's personal information. Better, more complete information, leads to better, more integrated and coordinated care so that no one falls through the cracks.

I want to thank Ontario's physicians, eHealth Ontario and everyone who has helped to make this progress possible. I also want to extend a special thank you again to the Information and Privacy Commissioner and her staff for their collaboration on this important bill.

Speaker, let me assure the members of this chamber, as well as each and every person in Ontario, that the pri-

vacy of everyone's personal health information is critically important to our government, which is why we need to move forward on these proposed amendments. I urge all members to support this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It gives me great pleasure to speak further to our government's proposed Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2013. I'd like to start off by setting the context for this proposed legislation.

The launch of our government's action plan for health care in January 2012 signaled the most radical transformation of the province's health care system since the introduction of medicare. When medicare was founded in the 1960s, acute conditions such as heart attack or injury and infectious disease were the primary health concerns of Canadians. As a result, health care systems across the country were designed to focus on acute, episodic care delivered by highly trained, dedicated doctors and nurses in hospitals.

Over the past several decades, the health care landscape has shifted dramatically. New technology, drugs and procedures have increased life expectancy and greatly improved patient care and safety. While those medical miracles have allowed people to live longer, our aging and growing population is increasingly putting pressure on the health care system. Now many people live with one or more complex chronic conditions and would prefer to remain in their homes and communities to receive appropriate care.

0920

As hospitals remain an essential part of the system, the level of care they provide is less than ideal for those living with chronic conditions. Moreover, the global financial meltdown in 2008 put Ontario's economy through a few very turbulent years, and the global situation remains uncertain to this day.

In the current constrained fiscal environment, health care spending can no longer be allowed to grow at the previous annual levels of 6% to 7%. If this rate of spending were to continue, government spending on health care would balloon to 70 cents per dollar a dozen years from now, leaving only 30 cents to be shared among four other public programs, including education. The challenge and the opportunity for Ontario is to build a quality health care system that meets people's needs at the right time and in the right place, a system that is accountable and financially sustainable.

There is strong consensus that the system needs to change and is ready, indeed eager, for reform. A transformed health care system requires much better integration of all sectors. There needs to be better links between primary care, the hospital and community- and home-based providers. That's where electronic health care comes in.

Much of the transformation in our health care sector requires the tremendous innovations in technology already in place, which includes virtual health initiatives

like telemedicine and the implementation of electronic health records for all the people of Ontario. Electronic health care is becoming an increasingly important tool and enabler for better access to quality patient care and health system integration across Ontario. A health care system built around paper-based records is transforming into one that allows fast, efficient and secure electronic data sharing among authorized health care providers, regardless of their location in the province.

A health care system based on electronic data sharing means better and more coordinated care for patients, which is especially vital for older Ontarians and those with chronic or complex conditions. Shared electronic health records, or EHRs, will allow laboratory results, medication histories, diagnostic images and patient information from electronic medical records to be shared between multiple health care providers within a patient's circle of care. The result will be improved quality, safety and integration of patient care. That's why investing in eHealth is such an important part of our government's action plan for health care and our commitment to provide Ontarians with the right care at the right time in the right place.

EHealth also serves as a vital part of ensuring that health care dollars are invested in the most efficient and effective manner possible. The action plan is the blueprint that will help Ontario realize its vision of being the healthiest place in North America to grow up and grow old.

With this shift, we are improving the quality of patient care, freeing up valuable acute care resources for those who need them most and increasing value for taxpayers' dollars. Higher quality care that is driven by evidence and delivered properly the first time is better for patients and better for taxpayers.

EHealth initiatives enable this health system modernization and lead to better, safer and more cost-effective care. To further this, the government has introduced legislation to ensure that this information is safe, secure and private.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is an important milestone. It shows how far we've come in implementing electronic health care for all Ontarians.

I will speak at greater length later in my remarks on eHealth Ontario's many accomplishments. But before we talk about where we are going, I think it's important to look over our shoulder at just how far we've come.

In 2007, only 770,000 Ontarians were benefiting from electronic medical records. Today, nearly 70% of all Ontarians have electronic medical records. That's about 9 million people in our province whose family doctors are able to call up their electronic medical records when they come in for an appointment or a checkup. In fact, more than 69% of primary care physicians and more than half of all specialists in communities across the province now use electronic medical records.

All of the province's 154 hospital systems and more than 9,400 community-based clinicians have made electronic medical records an integral part of their approach

to health care. Just to give perspective on the size of what we've achieved, that's more doctors in Ontario than all other Canadian provinces combined.

Over a quarter of a million hospital reports are now sent to doctors' electronic medical systems every month. What does this mean for patients? Well, it used to take 12 days to transfer hospital records by mail. Today, it takes 30 minutes. Not only does that reduce patient wait times, but it also aids with transitions in health care to help patients to avoid unnecessary hospital readmissions. In addition, the medication history of Ontario's seniors is now accessible to health care providers in all hospitals and emergency rooms, to ensure they get the proper care. Additionally, the Ontario laboratories information system is right now storing more than one billion lab results for 9.5 million Ontarians.

It is clear that electronic health care helps health professionals deliver the best care for their patients. But it also helps by connecting patients with health professionals across great distances. It quite literally brings care closer to home, which is particularly vital for Ontarians in rural and northern Ontario. There were 236,000 remote clinical consultations through the Ontario Telemedicine Network last year alone. And neurotrauma patients now have access to a neurosurgeon 24 hours a day, seven days a week. That's better and faster care for Ontarians in their greatest hour of need. And it's saving millions of dollars, helping to protect the sustainability of our health care system for future generations.

Clearly, Speaker, eHealth Ontario has made remarkable progress in bringing better care closer to patients. We have come a long way in just a few years. But now it's time to take the next step. That's why the government has introduced the proposed legislation before us today. This proposed legislation, if passed, would advance the health system transformation. It would help us realize better quality of care for patients, and better value for taxpayers. And it would ensure that our cherished health care system continues to be there for future generations of Ontarians. Most importantly, the legislative changes we propose would enable our government to move on with the next phase of developing an electronic health record, or EHR, for the people of Ontario by 2015. Without these legislative changes, the implementation of EHRs cannot proceed, and the full benefits of this technology will not be realized.

At the same time, we're absolutely committed to ensuring that the safety and security of electronic health records and the privacy of Ontario patients are protected. Ontarians agree that this is a critical element of implementing modern technological tools like electronic health records. Research has indicated that the Ontario public strongly supports EHRs. Ontarians agree that the use of EHR data for decision-making and planning by the ministry is a good use of health information and will result in better health care for those who need it and a more efficient health care system in Ontario. Ontarians can also see the positive impacts for health care providers and the health care system. They understand the potential benefits for themselves and their families.

Our research shows that the public does have some concerns about privacy. However, these concerns ranked lower than for other frequent online activities such as shopping, networking and banking. When asked about the extent of their concern around specific online services and personal privacy and security, Ontarians are most likely to be concerned about the privacy and security of social networking, followed by online banking, online shopping and then EHRs.

Fifty-five per cent of Ontarians were concerned or very concerned with their personal privacy and security with EHR services, compared to 57% with online shopping, 59% with online banking and 67% with social networking. I was gratified to learn that about 68% of Ontario residents surveyed probably or definitely think that the provincial government will ensure that appropriate measures are in place to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of personal health information contained in EHRs—a vote of confidence, clearly.

0930

This proposed legislation both satisfies the public's expectations and fulfills public trust. It's important to note that Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, commended our government for introducing these proposed amendments to Ontario's health privacy legislation, the Personal Health Information Protection Act, or PHIPA. As a former custodian of personal health information, wearing actually five hats, as commissioner of health services and medical officer of health for York region, the importance of protection of this information is of huge importance to me. Indeed, the commissioner has been advocating for a legislative framework to address the privacy and security issues associated with electronic health records for some time.

While PHIPA has served as a model for health privacy legislation across Canada and abroad since its introduction in 2004, it didn't adequately address the rights of individuals and the duties of health care providers in a shared electronic health record environment. According to the commissioner, "These amendments are necessary to foster public trust and confidence, as the health sector transitions from paper-based records to electronic health records."

The amendments to PHIPA will clarify the rights of Ontarians to limit the collection, use and disclosure of their personal health information in their electronic health record. It will be achieved through a variety of means, such as the application of consent directives to reflect the wishes of all patients. The amendments will also clarify the right of patients to access and request correction of their information and to find out who has accessed their health records. The amendments will also assure patients that only their authorized health care providers and those acting on their behalf may directly access personal health information in their electronic health record and will limit the purposes for which such information may be accessed. Additionally, there will be a requirement to log and monitor all accesses to electronic health records to help curtail any unauthorized collection, use and dis-

closure of personal health information, thus strengthening the safeguards.

The modernization of PHIPA will facilitate the introduction of electronic health records throughout the province. Such records have the potential to greatly improve diagnosis and treatment; to enhance patient safety; and to facilitate the coordination and integration of services—resulting in a more efficient and effective health system.

We deeply appreciate the contributions of the Information and Privacy Commissioner and her office in the development of this proposed legislation. I want to assure all the members of this House that our government will continue to work closely with her and the health care sector to ensure a smooth and seamless transition into the digital era, while strongly protecting the privacy of Ontarians and the confidentiality of their personal health information.

I'm pleased to say that with the help of eHealth Ontario our government has already made significant progress toward implementing elements of an electronic health record and toward moving related priorities forward. We are very proud of eHealth Ontario's accomplishments, and I'm pleased to outline them for you in greater detail.

First, I'd like to speak about the diagnostic imaging and picture archiving communications system, or DI and PACS. For the first time in the province's history, every hospital in Ontario is now able to produce and share filmless diagnostic images, including X-rays, CT scans, ultrasounds and MRIs, within their facilities, resulting in faster test results. Clinicians are able to make more timely and accurate diagnoses, and radiologists can access, read and report on digital images in an hour or less, rather than in 48 to 60 hours. For the patient, diagnostic imaging and picture archiving communications systems avoid duplication of tests and needless exposure to radiation. As DI and PACS are more fully integrated, test results can be accessible across the province.

Next, the drug profile viewer, or DPV, is saving lives in emergency departments every day. In every one of the province's emergency rooms, hospital wards, in-patient pharmacies and clinics, the individual drug profiles of Ontario's seniors can now be accessed by hospital staff. The viewer displays information for Ontario drug benefit and Trillium Drug Program recipients, who make up roughly 18% of the population of Ontario and account for 43% of all prescriptions written in the province.

The drug profile viewer allows the electronic sharing of medication information between authorized health care providers. DPV helps physicians to quickly identify the potential for harmful drug interactions or lethal combinations of drugs, saving lives every day.

I'd also like to speak about the Ontario Telemedicine Network. Ontario now has a globally recognized telemedicine network, with more than 1,600 sites across the province using the Ontario Telemedicine Network to deliver remote care to patients. The Telestroke program provides stroke patients in remote areas of the province with 24/7 access to life-saving emergency care that they

might not receive without this real-time, expert neurological assessment. Last year, OTN supported more than 236,000 clinical consultations.

The emergency neurosurgery image transfer system, or ENITS, is also helping to save lives. Brain CT scans of patients suffering head trauma are now transmitted and viewed within minutes by a 24/7 on-call neurosurgeon who consults with medical staff at any of Ontario's 97 acute care centres.

Instead of moving patients to neurosurgeons, neurosurgeons can access reliable, time-sensitive patient information remotely, enabling them to determine quickly if patients need to be transferred to receive acute care. Patients avoid unnecessary risky travel and are able to receive specialized care faster and closer to home. Families are saved from the trauma of having their loved one being physically moved away.

Transferring neurosurgery patients to other hospitals, particularly out of country, can cost as much as \$100,000 per transfer, and in the past, 49% of emergency neurosurgery consults were referred to neurosurgical units. In 2012-13, however, only 34% of these patients were transferred after an ENITS consultation, and, to date, this service has saved the Ontario health system tens of millions of dollars.

ENITS is managed through CritiCall Ontario, a 24/7 emergency referral service that uses sophisticated referral logic software to calculate the distance between the calling physician and potential sites that can provide the necessary expertise.

Next, let's look at the Ontario laboratories information system, also known as OLIS. OLIS collects information from the province's hospital community and public health labs to create a centralized record of a patient's lab test results that can be accessed by authorized practitioners across the province. Earlier last year, the first clinical use of OLIS was deployed at the Ottawa Hospital. We've heard from doctors there who have said that this technology has revolutionized their practice.

EHealth Ontario has been rolling OLIS data out to clinicians since then, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. OLIS has more than 1.25 billion individual test results in its database, representing 9.5 million Ontarians. For providers, this means information is at their fingertips within minutes or even seconds, helping them to make faster and more informed clinical decisions. Faster access to information means more time dedicated to patient care and less time spent on administrative paper chasing.

For our young patients and their families, the wait time for lab test results will be shorter, so treatment can start that much sooner. As for the health care system, it means fewer duplicate tests because the patient's lab test history will be right there for the health care providers to access, and there will better integration of care between family providers and hospital providers. This initiative is part of our e-health strategy to put valuable patient lab data into the hands of clinicians throughout Ontario.

Lastly, let's talk about electronic medical records, EMRs. An EMR is the computer software physicians use

to electronically collect, manage and store a patient's medical data. It's the digital equivalent of the old paper files and charts that your doctor used to use and keep in an office cabinet.

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Over 10,000 providers providing health care to more than nine million Ontarians have or are in the process of implementing EMR systems. Approximately 69% of Ontario's primary care physicians are moving forward with an EMR. In fact, Ontario has the largest number of physicians using an EMR in Canada. The latest EMRs collect over 30 diabetes-related data elements, 25 chronic heart failure-related data elements, and more than 45 asthma, hypertension and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease-related data elements.

Physician records are increasingly connected to regional health care institutions. Each month, more than 375,000 hospital reports, such as patient discharge summaries—which are critical to avoiding expensive hospital readmissions—are sent electronically to clinicians so patients can get better and timelier care from their primary care provider. Approximately 3,000 types of lab results are currently being accessed through EMRs.

Electronic medical records are more comprehensive and support access to Ontario laboratories information systems—the provincial database I mentioned earlier—that contain approximately 69% of community hospital and public health lab tests.

Speaker, my colleagues across the aisle may each have an EMR in their physician's office. That means details about the care they receive from a family doctor, specialist, nurse, dietitian or other health provider is captured electronically using EMR software. This makes it possible for all members of their health care team, like specialists, nurse practitioners, emergency rooms, home care and long-term-care homes, to share accurate, clear and concise information about their health care status.

For example, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, the AOHC: All of these member sites which provide community-governed primary care to so many of the province's most vulnerable groups are installing electronic medical record systems so that 800 ordering clinicians, nurses and doctors can provide better care to their patients, including those who may not have a family physician. AOHC member sites include all of the province's community health centres and aboriginal health access centres, as well as several nurse practitioner-led clinics. EMRs help in managing chronic conditions and in preventing drug interactions. These are just some of our many e-health achievements, and I'm proud to highlight all the progress we've made in e-health.

Electronic health records, or EHRs, are the next stage of e-health. EHRs bring together an individual's health information from health care providers, like your family doctor or specialist, as well as other information like lab test results, prescription drug information and diagnostic images like X-rays, CT scans and MRIs. Our proposed legislation would support better information sharing and coordination, resulting in improved health care, particu-

larly for those with complex health care needs. For example, the diverse partners in a community health link, from hospitals to primary care providers to community care, would have appropriate access to patient health information, enabling greater collaboration and better care for their patients. Better, more complete information leads to more integrated and coordinated care so that no one falls through the cracks.

Speaker, let me assure the members of this chamber, as well as each and every person in Ontario, that the privacy of everyone's personal health information is critically important to our government. These proposed legislative amendments are part of our plan to protect privacy and security of personal health information in EHRs. I urge all members to support them so that we can keep our commitment to provide every Ontarian with an EHR by 2015.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to comment briefly on the remarks made by the Minister of Health and by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham with respect to Bill 78. I will be speaking on it further—I think I'm the next speaker in the lineup here—and will have some further comments.

But I think, overall, we have to take a look at this government's record on delivering eHealth, and I think that by all accounts it's been a pretty abysmal failure. That's not just us saying it. We've certainly heard from the Auditor General on that, who commented that up to \$2 billion has pretty much been wasted without a functioning electronic medical records system to show for it.

We don't really know where we are in the great scheme of things, but I would say the fact that this legislation, which sets up the basic framework for an electronic health records system, is only being passed now—surely you would think that this would have been done some years ago in order to be able to even develop the system. So it certainly begs the question of where we are in the development of the system overall, and I suspect we're still many years away from having a functioning system.

That is a great shame for a number of reasons, one of them being economically. We have all kinds of tests and medical procedures that have to be duplicated because health professionals aren't able to communicate in real time with each other, and so they have to duplicate them or else have people continue to carry around things like X-rays and so on. That shouldn't be happening in the province of Ontario, not at the state that we're at now.

But I think, more tellingly, there's a human component to this that we can't discount. I've heard from many, many people who have spouses with terminal illnesses that every time they go and see a different medical professional that they are involved with, they have to recount their story time and time again. This is very wearing on people, but it also means that every time they tell it, they get further away from what has happened. Information falls between the cracks. So it's really essential, both in

human and economic terms, that we get moving with this.

We will be supporting this legislation because it's essential for the framework, but whether this government gets this done or not, I'm not holding my breath.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's a pleasure to rise to speak about Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records.

We're going to be doing a lot of homework on this bill, Mr. Speaker; I need to tell you this. There are a lot of items that we need to go through in this bill to make sure that the integrity, the confidentiality and the sharing of information are going to be upheld, which is first and foremost the concern of constituents and people across the province. It's going to be a tedious process.

We're going to be looking at supporting this bill. However, we're going to be looking at having many discussions over the committee stage, because Ontarians expect more and they want more. I don't mean to throw stones across to this government, but essentially there has been some legislation that has come forward in this House in the past where, as we go through the discussions, issues are highlighted, but again they are not really dissected, they are not really analyzed, and we don't learn from the mistakes that we've done in the past.

This is something that is very concerning. We really need to look at making sure of the integrity and that the individuals across this province—because now we're going from a paper to an electronic copy, and there are a lot of discrepancies. There are a lot of red flags that raise in my mind right now that could happen through this entire process.

So we're going to analyze this, along with our colleague from Nickel Belt, our critic for health and long-term care, and we're going to be extremely diligent in holding this government to account in regard to how this act actually gets implemented.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased to add my comments in support of Bill 78, the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act.

Yes, indeed, as previous speakers have said, your personal information about your health—it's very important to be private and to be secure. But let me say to you, as a health care professional for part of my life, how it used to be. Okay?

So if you needed a consultation or if you needed to be transferred to another hospital or something like this, then they would take the paper file, they would print it, and they would send it by mail or send a nurse or a health care professional with the patient for the transfer. Sometimes the file was lost, and sometimes the file was left on the printing machine. This was not the perfect world, and it had been like this for a long time.

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Thanks to eHealth and all this system—because we hear all the negative part about eHealth—I have the

privilege to be a patient in a family health team where eHealth is there. When you need to see a specialist, you can go the next day, if it's possible, because then he can open his computer and he sees your file. He sees all your results and everything.

Yes, we need to be sure that all the information is kept confidential and that only people who need to see it will see it, but let's say we're not in the age of the stone. We have made a lot of progress, and this is the continuation of the improvement of health care in Ontario. I'm very pleased to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to listen to the important discussion this morning on eHealth. I think our critic, Christine Elliott, summed it up when she said, "How's it working today?" They've been at it for 10 years; it's an absolute disaster, on any measure at all.

I don't blame the minister personally. The parliamentary assistant—I have a lot of respect. She was a medical officer of health; she should probably be the Minister of Health, actually, and no disrespect at all.

Here's what I'm saying: They've had 10 years to get it right. Most of the world is automated. This province is completely mismanaged. I'm not even going to talk about the bill because I was the PA to health for about two or three years in this system and there should have been a lot of work done in the last 10 years, and nothing has happened.

Here's a good example right here. There's an article in the Toronto Star on October 3. It's entitled, "Fundraisers an Increasing Necessity for Sick Ontarians." This is a human story. Lisa Glennie spent some time in the hospital. "After she suffered her stroke, Glennie spent months in hospital receiving" rehab. "She still can't walk on her own, has difficulty talking" and it affects her memory. "Now the hospital wants her out and is charging her \$1,700 a month to stay," because she has nowhere to go. "Meanwhile, OHIP refuses to pay for Glennie's rehab sessions...." Sick and ignored: That's how it is in Ontario today. This isn't me; this is a Toronto Star article, October 3. That's a report card on how Ontario's health care system is working today.

I have constituents of mine who can't get the proper treatment—medication. They are spending half of the budget now, basically, on health care. I understand that the system is part of this—I, at one time, worked for IBM; I was a COBOL programmer. I get it. Why isn't it up and working today? It's shameful, the disregard that they have for Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly extremely disappointed at the comments by my colleagues the member for Whitby–Oshawa, the member for Durham—the two from the official opposition. I would have thought that after listening the last 45 minutes, you would have seen the incredible strides that we've made with electronic

medical records, which were detailed in so many different aspects.

In addition, the member for Durham doesn't seem to understand the meaning of the word "respect"; however, I'll leave that piece.

To the member for Algoma–Manitoulin: Yes, of course, we share your concerns around the protection of personal health information. I did mention in my remarks that I was a custodian of five different health records. I had to make sure, whenever there was a request for information from one of those five datasets, that we didn't confuse which dataset was which. There was a great deal of precision necessary for this because many patients actually appeared in all five datasets. This is an incredibly complicated issue in terms of the protection of privacy. It's now being done electronically. It certainly has been done in a very thoughtful way, and we have made real progress in a very complicated area. It's benefiting patients across the province.

To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Yes, indeed, I remember meeting her for the very first time when she was chair of the health committee in the region of Ottawa–Carleton many, many years ago. In her long experience as a nurse, she knows of what she speaks when it comes to patient care and personal health information security. I am so glad that, at least on this side of the House, we are absolutely committed to putting this legislation through.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to rise today to speak about Bill 78 on behalf of the PC caucus. Bill 78 is, of course, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records, commonly known as the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, or EPHIPA.

The acts that are affected by Bill 78 are the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004. Of course, it is the latter act which is the most affected by Bill 78. I will be discussing these changes in due course, but first I would like to comment on the state of development of electronic medical records in Ontario generally. I think we really need to set the record straight here.

By all accounts, this Liberal government's handling of this file has been abysmal. Ontarians found out from the Auditor General about the stunning waste of up to two billion taxpayer dollars with little to show for it in terms of a fully functioning electronic medical records system. We have heard a lot today from the Minister of Health and the member for Oak Ridges–Markham about the amazing progress that has been made in the development of e-health, with nine million Ontarians having access to electronic medical records, but the fact of the matter is, that doesn't really mean very much.

All it means is that more physicians have digitized their records, so instead of having paper files, they now have their clients' or patients' medical records on a com-

puter. But the whole point of having an electronic medical record system is to have the health care providers that are involved in a patient's care, and increasingly people have more people involved than just their own family doctor, able to communicate with each other in real time. That is not even close to happening yet in Ontario, and that is a real tragedy.

There are numerous systems out there, all over the place. The government continues to fund new systems that don't connect to each other. We are years and years away from having a system that is actually going to work. That is a tragedy because so much money has been spent for so little, but it is a tragedy in human terms, too.

A functioning electronic health record could go a long way toward eliminating patient death through toxic drug interactions, which do happen in Ontario each and every year. Working electronic health records would also reduce the need for clients and patients to verbally recount their medical history to each health care provider they see. As I mentioned before, I've heard from terminally ill cancer patients, and they have told me how devastating it is to have to recount their personal history every time they see a different health care provider.

Even if you're prepared to ignore the human costs of not having electronic health records, it's hard to ignore the economic costs. Diagnostic tests and procedures often need to be repeated because results cannot be easily shared, and skilled health care practitioners are still required to take medical histories repeatedly and to use phone calls and faxes to communicate information. I've heard from numerous health care providers in the home care area, particularly nursing organizations, that routinely have to use fax machines to communicate information. I used to think that it was lawyers, like myself, who were dinosaurs in the digital age, but this is still happening in health care in Ontario. It's certainly not by choice, I can tell you that.

Time after time, in my capacity as health critic for the official opposition, I hear from health care providers, from doctors to nurses to pharmacists and many others, that it is essential that Ontario develop a functioning electronic health records system in order to transition to a 21st-century model of health care. Clearly, we need to get on with it, and I hope that with the passage of this act, if it does come to pass, this Liberal government will take this to heart and move forward, but I am certainly not going to hold my breath at this point.

Bill 78 deals with the protection of personal health information in the context of an electronic health record, so of course, it is essential before e-health can move forward. The question, however, is, why wasn't this essential component dealt with before now? Surely this is one of the most important building blocks in developing e-health, so shouldn't it have been developed years ago?

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The fact that these standards are only now being developed is quite troubling, and begs the question of where we are now in e-health development without having this basic framework in place. So that remains to be

seen. I hope we'll get that information soon, but that's a question for another day.

I'd like now to turn to Bill 78, but before I speak about the specific aspects of the bill I'd like to spend a few minutes discussing the history of health information privacy legislation in Ontario, and I hope that it will help to place Bill 78 in the appropriate context.

The concept of confidentiality with respect to health information is relatively new. Prior to 1977, it was relatively easy for insurance companies, investigation agencies, police and lawyers to obtain access to patients' medical records. I can certainly say that when I started off as a young lawyer many years ago this was the case, and it was just in the early years of my practice that this began to change—and I certainly would say for the better, because confidentiality of health information is absolutely essential for patients in our province.

In December 1977, the Ontario government, under Premier Bill Davis, appointed a commission headed by Mr. Justice Horace Krever to conduct an inquiry into the issue following allegations of police access to patient records in OHIP and health care facilities without obtaining their consent. There was, at that time, no overarching legislation for the protection of privacy and health information, and each health care facility was on its own in terms of developing its own policies and procedures. The commission began its work in April 1978. The report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Confidentiality of Health Information was released in 1980, a three-volume, 1,626-page report—very comprehensive, and it contained a number of key elements that we still rely on today with our privacy legislation.

An excellent article on the history of health information privacy legislation in Ontario, written by Andrea Anna Guerin and Christian David Fortin in 2008, said this about the work of the Krever commission:

"The Krever report identifies for the first time the discrepancies in the practices of health care institutions, health care professionals and the ambiguity in the legislation governing privacy and health information. It also recognized that the implementation of legislation to provide a universal provincial framework for privacy and health information should not be so cumbersome to impede the effective and timely delivery of health care."

So it is important to recognize, as was noted, that there is a need to achieve a balance between the protection of an individual's health information versus the need for health professionals to access this information under certain circumstances.

In any event, the Ontario government then attempted to implement the essential recommendations of the Krever report. The Ministry of Health attempted to initiate reforms in June 1996 with its paper entitled *A Legal Framework for Health Information*. This was followed in 1997 with the *Personal Health Information Protection Act*. Although it contained most of the essential elements necessary for protection of health information, it was not successful, nor was its successor act, *An Act respecting Personal Health Information and Related Matters*, in 2000. The work continued.

In 2002, the Ministry of Consumer and Business Services and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care released a draft document entitled *Privacy of Personal Information Act, 2002*, known as POPIA. We love these acronyms. It too failed to pass, and it was not until November 1, 2004, that Ontario passed the personal health information privacy act, known as PHIPA. PHIPA succeeded in providing an overarching framework for the protection of personal health information. It was met with approval by the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario, Dr. Ann Cavoukian.

In her submission to the Standing Committee on General Government on January 27, 2004—before the act was passed—the Information and Privacy Commissioner stated with respect to Bill 31, the Health Information Protection Act, “We are pleased that this government has moved promptly to introduce a comprehensive legal framework to protect personal health information. Our office has advocated the need for such legislation for many years. Members of the public, health care providers and other stakeholder groups have anticipated introduction of legislation of this nature since the Report of the Royal Commission on Confidentiality of Health Information in Ontario (the Krever commission report) in 1980.”

The commissioner then went on to say: “We also are pleased that this office has been identified as the oversight body for this legislation. This provides the public with a single point of contact for both public sector and health sector privacy matters. This will facilitate implementation of the legislation and minimize confusion on the part of the public.”

So, in essence, Mr. Speaker, health information and privacy legislation was long overdue in Ontario and, certainly, while we believe that PHIPA is far from perfect, particularly with mental health issues, there is at least a basic framework in place to protect an individual’s right to privacy with respect to their health records. Bill 78 is in many ways the next logical step to be taken in continuing to protect privacy. As we move to an electronic medical records system with multiple health care providers having access to individual medical records, it’s essential to establish a framework and protocols for the sharing of this information and to ensure that it is only used for prescribed purposes.

As was mentioned earlier, Bill 78 amends PHIPA in several key respects. First, section 34 of the act is amended to permit prescribed persons who are not health information custodians to collect and use health numbers for the purpose of creating or maintaining the electronic health record. Section 51 of the act is also amended to make part V of the act apply to a prescribed organization as if it were a health information custodian with respect to the specified records and as if the organization has custody or control of the records. Part V.1 adds a whole new section to deal with electronic health records because they weren’t contemplated in 2004 with the passage of PHIPA.

The Minister of Health is required to establish an advisory committee for the purpose of making recom-

mendations to the minister concerning specified matters related to the electronic health record and can make directives to a prescribed organization with respect to carrying out its responsibilities. The minister would be required to take the recommendations of the advisory committee and the Information and Privacy Commissioner into account before so directing a prescribed organization.

The effect of the above amendments would be to recognize that there will necessarily be an entity or organization that will be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the electronic health record other than the original health care provider and to provide that the same rules that apply to the health care provider will also apply to the prescribed organization.

The rules around the use of this confidential information are specifically spelled out. Part V.1 prohibits the health information custodian from collecting personal health information from the electronic health record maintained by a prescribed organization except for the purpose of providing or assisting in the provision of health care to an individual or eliminating or reducing a significant risk of serious bodily harm to a person or group of persons where the health information custodian believes on reasonable grounds that the collection is necessary for this purpose. Individuals may withhold their consent to the collection or disclosure of his or her personal health information in the electronic health record, subject to certain exceptions. This directive can only be overridden if there would otherwise be a risk of serious bodily harm, if it was not possible to obtain consent in a timely manner or if there was a risk of potentially harmful medication interactions.

That, Mr. Speaker, is the essence of Bill 78. In her introduction of Bill 78, the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act, or EPHIPA, on May 29, the minister indicated that the Information and Privacy Commissioner had indicated her support for the bill. I subsequently wrote to the commissioner myself to obtain her view of Bill 78, and I would like to take this opportunity to read the letter which I received from Ms. Cavoukian in answer to my inquiry. I would like to take a few minutes to do that now, Mr. Speaker.

In her letter to me dated August 23, 2013, Ms. Cavoukian indicated: “I would first like to clarify the provisions in the bill related to ‘prescribed organizations.’ A ‘prescribed organization’ will not be appointed by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care but rather will be prescribed in a regulation by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. Section 55.12 of the bill requires that these regulations be subject to the public consultation requirements in section 74 of the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

“A ‘prescribed organization’ will also be required to comply with detailed requirements found in section 55.3 of the bill. These are similar to the requirements imposed on an entity currently responsible for creating or maintaining electronic health records in the province of Ontario under a regulation to the Personal Health Infor-

mation Protection Act. These detailed requirements include an obligation on the 'prescribed organization' to take reasonable steps to limit the personal health information it receives to that which is reasonably necessary for the purpose of creating or maintaining the electronic health record, and to perform privacy impact assessments and threat risk assessments in respect of each system that retrieves, processes or integrates personal health information in the electronic health record.

"The failure by a 'prescribed organization' to comply with these detailed requirements is subject to an investigation by my office and, if my office determines that the Personal Health Information Protection Act or its regulation have been contravened, my office has the power to issue an order which is enforceable as a judgment or order of the court.

"Section 55.3 of the bill also requires a 'prescribed organization' to have in place and comply with practices and procedures to protect the privacy of individuals whose personal health information it receives, and to maintain the confidentiality of that information. These practices and procedures must further be reviewed and approved by my office every three years. Over the past 10 years, we have developed a rigorous process for organizations whose practices and procedures must be reviewed by my office. Such organizations are required to implement policies, procedures, agreements and other documents that comply with a comprehensive manual, that my office developed (exceeding 100 pages) entitled the Manual for the Review and Approval of Prescribed Persons and Prescribed Entities. A similar manual is being developed for 'prescribed organizations.'

"With respect to the concern you raised in relation to third parties retained to assist 'prescribed organizations' in creating or maintaining the electronic health record, it should be noted that section 55.3 of the bill requires a 'prescribed organization' to ensure that employees and any other person acting on its behalf comply with the restrictions that apply to the 'prescribed organization,' detailed in section 55.3 of the bill. It also requires persons acting on behalf of a 'prescribed organization' to comply with the restrictions and conditions that are necessary to enable the 'prescribed organization' to comply with the requirements in section 55.3 of the bill. Once again, this is similar to the provisions that currently exist under the regulation to the Personal Health Information Protection Act.

"It should also be noted that a 'prescribed organization' is required to immediately notify me, in writing, if personal health information in the electronic health record has been viewed, handled, made available, released or otherwise dealt with by a 'prescribed organization' or a person acting on its behalf in a manner that contravenes the Personal Health Information Protection Act or its regulation.

"Finally, you requested my views about the bill more generally. I have been advocating for a legislative framework to address privacy and security issues associated with electronic health records for many years. While the

Personal Health Information Protection Act has served as a model for health privacy legislation across Canada and abroad since its introduction in 2004, it did not adequately address the rights of individuals and the duties and obligations of health care providers in a shared electronic health record environment.

"This bill will clarify the rights of Ontarians to limit the collection, use and disclosure of their personal health information for health care purposes in the shared electronic health record, to access and request a correction of their information and find out who has accessed their information. It will also set out the purposes for which personal health information may be collected, used or disclosed and require the auditing and monitoring of all accesses to prevent unauthorized collections, uses and disclosures. As a result, I welcome the introduction of this bill, which will serve to enhance the privacy of individuals while facilitating the efficient and effective delivery of health care services.

"This bill, if passed, will modernize the Personal Health Information Protection Act and facilitate the introduction of electronic health records in the province of Ontario, which already lags far behind other jurisdictions in Canada. Electronic health records have the potential!"—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Excuse me. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have two distinguished guests to recognize today. First of all, in the public gallery this morning is Winnifred Kisob, who is the mother of page Massoma Kisob, here to observe her daughter on her last day with us as a page. Please welcome her.

Finally, I'd like to introduce my overlapping member of Parliament, seated in the members' east gallery. I'd like members to recognize Mississauga–Streetsville member of Parliament Brad Butt, who is joining us today.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a real honour today to stand and recognize the federal member of Parliament for the riding of Durham, and my son, Erin O'Toole. Welcome to Queen's Park, Erin.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The one-liners write themselves, but I'm going to resist.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a delight to recognize a volunteer of ours from Parkdale–High Park, Amina Sheikh, in the members' gallery.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to recognize someone who is not here with us in body but is most definitely here with us in spirit, and that is the great author Alice Munro, who has just been awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's my pleasure to introduce my friend from London West, Ali Chabar, to the Legislature today. Ali is a lifelong London resident. He has committed himself to serving the community. He is the past and current PC candidate for London West. Welcome, Ali.

Miss Monique Taylor: It's my pleasure to once again welcome the father of our page Gabrielle Le Donne, Mr. Dino Le Donne. Welcome again to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to welcome the proud parents of page Aly Muhammad from my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South: Mrs. Nadia Mithani and Mr. Amin Mithani. They are in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to welcome for the first time to the Legislature my mom and dad, Ray and Sharon Smith from New Brunswick, who are here for Thanksgiving weekend. Also, my daughters for the first time are going to be taking in question period today: Payton and Reagan are there as well.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I'd like to welcome a group from the Kenton Adult Learning Centre, up in the gallery, to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Chris Galloway all the way from Alberta—first time visiting Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to welcome to the Legislature Nancy Tomkins, president of the Denturist Association of Ontario, and Mr. Frank Ordorico, vice-president of the Denturist Association of Ontario. They are in the members' east gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's my pleasure to welcome to the House the relatives of our great page from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, Jasper Ross: his mother, Lisa Sizeland-Ross; his uncle Brett Sizeland; and friend Marie Mugahid. They are here in the west gallery. As well, I want to welcome the parents of my LA, Olga and Mauro Manfredi, the mother and father of Luca Manfredi, who works in my office.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: It is my pleasure today to introduce two Buddhist monks: Bhante Saranapala from the West End Buddhist Temple and Jue Qian from the Fo Guang Shan Temple. Both of them are here along with monks from 10 temples. We're having a Buddhist heritage day, and I invite everybody to rooms 228 and 230 after question period.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to welcome to the Legislature Mr. Rob Anderson, Mr. David Rae and Mr. David Gallagher, who are here to have a discussion with the Minister of Finance concerning some very important issues affecting their company, AIC.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce three constituents from my riding of St. Paul's: Kathleen, Bob and Adam Garner, who are here to see Sean Garner, a page from my riding, serving as page captain on this last day for our pages.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. Earlier this morning, my colleagues and I sat through the justice committee with the Auditor General while the member from Mississauga—Streetsville decided that he would question the integrity and the professionalism of the Auditor General and her findings.

In that committee, the auditor confirmed that your decision surrounding the power plants and the cancellation were favourable to TCE and not to the taxpayer, that political interference from the Premier's office to make TCE whole hamstringing the OPA and cost us more money, that the OPA said that Napanee was not a good replacement location and that, as a result of that, your government spent an extra \$513 million for the relocation of the power plant—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —GTA.

We also know the government has known since December 2010 that the number was far greater than \$33 million.

You have proven inept. Will you resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As has been repeated many times in this House, the Premier is the one who wrote to the Auditor General to examine the Oakville relocation. We thank the auditor, and we accept her findings.

Speaker, I think, as has been said repeatedly in this House, this was a decision of this party, also the PC Party, also the NDP. It was something on which we had found common ground. This was a plant that had to be relocated.

I have to tell you, Speaker, as you know, the Auditor General has credited the Premier for taking action. She said, "I did have the opportunity to meet with the Premier ... it was good to hear that they are taking the report seriously and that they are taking ... actions and changing the way things are going to be done in the future."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: That was a pretty good Richard Nixon impression, Speaker, but I can tell you something: The Auditor General earlier today confirmed that there was political interference by this government—not by the Progressive Conservative Party, not by the New Democrats, but by the Liberal Party of Ontario and the Liberal Party of Ontario alone.

Your Premier was the campaign chair of the last election. She signed the document that handed over all of the bargaining rights to TCE to make them "whole." Okay? That is quite significant, and it proves what the auditor also would say: that the cost taxpayers ended up

having had nothing more to do than your own political future.

She said that had you sited those plants somewhere else in the GTA, you would have saved the taxpayers \$513 million. She also said if we had waited it out, it would have cost us nothing at all.

My question, again, for this Deputy Premier: Will she resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, the answer to that question is "No," but I can tell you what we will do, and that is that we will fix the system so that this does not happen again. There is widespread agreement that the original siting was not appropriate. That's why we're improving the siting of large energy infrastructure projects by implementing the recommendations of the OPA and the IESO. Communities will have a say right from the beginning. We will get the siting decisions right from the start, so this will not happen again.

We're also introducing new rules that are limiting political staff involvement in commercial third-party transactions. I believe that the staff in the then Premier's office acted in good faith, but we are acting on lessons learned.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplement—ary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If ever there was proof that it's time to change the team that leads the province, it was that answer. It is that answer that proves that Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservatives should assume this government, because we wouldn't have done what they did. They created the OPA to remove political interference from energy decisions, and then they ignored the OPA.

It was the OPA who told your government that it wasn't the appropriate location to go to Napanee. You ignored them. You cost us \$513 million more. You knew that if you did nothing, if you let it wait out, we wouldn't have had to pay one red cent.

We have a motion of want of confidence on the order paper. I am asking you today, Deputy Premier: Will you call that for a confidence vote? Will you allow members of this assembly to debate that, and will you allow us to vote against this government and make sure that we can have an election for the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I think it might be time for a walk down memory lane. I think the member opposite needs to be reminded of their record when it comes to energy. They might remember the attempt to privatize Hydro One; that led to a \$19.5-billion debt charge that Ontarians are still paying off to this day.

They might remember that their failed privatization caused electricity prices to rise a whopping 30%—

Interjections.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —that's a 30% increase in 30 weeks. In 30 weeks, electricity prices went up 30% under their watch. They artificially capped prices, and that resulted in a \$1-billion additional figure being tacked on to the stranded debt.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Bad timing. The member from Renfrew will come to order and, to the government members, when an answer is being given, I need to hear it as well.

Wrap up, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton does not help himself either. Now he has been told.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: And if that's not bad enough, they more than doubled the use of dirty coal.

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the education minister. We all agree in this Legislature that education is vitally important to the future prosperity of this country.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration will come to order. Please.

Mr. Rob Leone: We agree that we have the best teachers, the most caring teachers and the hardest-working teachers right here in the province of Ontario. The only difference is, our party wants to see those teachers in front of the classroom, while it appears that the Premier would rather see some of our youngest teachers unemployed and at home.

The member from Nepean—Carleton has brought forward a thoughtful piece of legislation that brings parents, students and teachers together in support. It allows teachers to be hired based on their skill, ensuring that the best and the brightest are in front of the next generation of students. Parents support this bill, teachers support this bill, and students will benefit greatly from this bill.

Minister, will you support the bill and give Ontario teachers the respect that they deserve?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to answer this question. First of all, let me make it perfectly clear that we have said to all our partners in the education sector that we are perfectly willing to work with them to find improvements to the regulation. We admit that there are some problems with this regulation.

But what we will not do, Speaker, is rip up collective agreements, unlike the folks opposite, who think that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham is dangerously close to being asked to withdraw. Finish, please.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker. We don't have a white paper policy document that says to lay off 10,000 teachers to balance the books. They do.

We think that we have a collective agreement, and we agree that we need some improvements to this regulation.

In fact, I've just announced the appointment of some people to look into this, and I'd be happy to follow up within the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: What the minister is telling us is that she doesn't want the best teachers teaching our kids in our classrooms.

Let me tell you about Jason Trinh. Jason is a talented teacher with a master's degree in molecular biology. After filling in at two of Toronto's top high schools, he was honoured with the Premier's New Teacher of the Year award. He was also hand-picked to design a summer math camp and was so successful that he was credited for boosting grade 9 math scores.

But Jason can't find a job. He can't even get an interview because he sits 800th on a seniority list of more than 2,000 teachers. Under regulation 274, principals are forced to hire whatever names happen to be at the top of their seniority list.

Jason Trinh is the type of teacher we need in front of our classrooms. I would hope and would like to think that his award actually means something. Minister, why don't you think that our children deserve the best teachers in front of our classrooms?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: You know, it's really interesting that they want to talk about the best teachers. We actually—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton is now warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We actually happen to think that when school boards have hired people to be occasional teachers, when they've interviewed and hired people to be long-term occasional teachers, that that is in fact a pool of really great teachers. We think that school boards have been responsible in choosing long-term occasional teachers. Apparently, they don't.

But, Speaker, we are not ripping up collective agreements. We have a different approach about how to deal with unions than they do. We have said from the beginning, both the Premier and I, that we will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Rob Leone: Minister, this is about fixing an unfortunate mistake to ensure fairness for teachers, and nothing else. I urge this government to support this bill and send it to committee so we can have an open conversation about what to do about this situation.

We know the NDP tried to shut down debate on this bill, as we know where their interests lie, and that's what we have come to expect from them. But being in govern-

ment means that you have to do what's best for the people of the province of Ontario, not just what's best for the special interests that helped get you elected.

We are on the side of parents. The PC caucus is on the side of principals, we are on the side of students and we are on the side of teachers. Why is the government, the NDP and the special interests the only ones left standing on the other side?

Support this member's bill. Repeal regulation 274. Let's get the best teachers in front of our students.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. 1050

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think we'd better have a little bit of perspective here on recent history. We are the people who said, "We're not ripping up collective agreements. We're going to sit down with our partners. We're going to have some conversations and reach memorandums of understanding with each and every one of our partners." As a result of those conversations, working together, we have a school system this year that is calm and has extra-curriculars, and that is a result of working with people, not just saying, "We're going to rip up the collective agreement."

We will continue to work with people to look for solutions, but we're not laying people off, we're not ripping up collective agreements and we're not repealing regulation; we're working to improve it.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The Auditor General said that the cabinet minute that the Premier signed on arbitration tied the OPA's hands. Why did the Premier tie the OPA's hands when it was dealing with TransCanada?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. The auditor said a number of things in her report. Included in that report was the following quote: "Making assumptions about future events and their effects involves considerable uncertainty. Accordingly, readers should be cautioned that while our estimates differ from estimates previously announced by the Ontario Power Authority (OPA), they will also likely differ from the actual costs and savings that will be known only in the future."

The people on the government side, including the OPA, throughout these conversations dealt in good faith. Any documents that were produced with respect to the negotiations were done in good faith. There were different perspectives on the facts; the auditor has referred to that. But we have accepted the auditor's report. The Premier has accepted it; I have accepted it. We've taken strong action to ensure that power plants are properly sited in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I guess the minister didn't like the question and didn't want to answer the question. The Premier signed a cabinet minute that tied the OPA's

hands. The Auditor General said there was nothing that gave the OPA any strength in their dealings with TransCanada. She signed a deal that took all the protections for Ontarians and cut them off at the knees. She sold us down the river. Why did the Premier sign this arbitration agreement? Did she not understand or did she not care?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: On October 7, 2010, the government publicly committed to relocating the Oakville plant and the OPA sent a termination letter to TransCanada Energy. The arbitration agreement reflected promises that had already been made in the OPA's termination letter to TCE on October 7, 2010. As per the Auditor General just this morning, the arbitration agreement just reiterated the original letter sent from the OPA to TransCanada.

Even MPP Peter Tabuns—I should say the member for Toronto–Danforth—agrees there was nothing extraordinary about this cabinet directive. On April 11, he said, “I don’t see it as a smoking gun. We knew that the cabinet was approving this process. So this does not surprise me.”

He’s reinventing history, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There is no history to reinvent. The auditor said that when people sign deals, they should know what they mean. Did the Premier realize she signed a cabinet minute that left Ontarians guaranteeing profits for a private power company? Why would the Premier ask Ontarians to back up TransCanada and not themselves?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I believe the Auditor General also said at committee this morning that she had received a number of legal opinions. Those legal opinions indicated that had this been litigated, it would not have been in the interests of the province. The costs would likely have been higher. So there are different perspectives.

I read the quote from the Auditor General that said we should look at these facts cautiously and from different perspectives. She has been very objective, she’s been very fair, she’s been very neutral in her findings, particularly when she says that the arbitration agreement just reiterated the original letter sent from the OPA to TransCanada. Mr. Speaker, I believe that answers the question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the Minister of Finance—to the Minister of Energy: The auditor is quite objective. She’s saying you guys wrestled yourselves to the ceiling. You took—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m sorry, I do need clarification. You said two ministers. Energy? Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let me do this all over again. It’s pretty clear what the auditor was saying this morning. She was saying that this government wrestled itself to the ceiling when it came to a settlement with TCE. You took the most expensive route in order to settle this thing where you could have got out for absolutely nothing.

The question is, why did the Premier, the current Premier today, sign a cabinet document back then that led to us having to pay these people over \$685 million?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I think he just asked the same question. It had to do with the Premier signing with respect to the arbitration agreement.

I want to repeat the answer. The arbitration agreement reflected promises that had already been made in the OPA’s termination letter to TransCanada Energy on October 7, 2010. The Auditor General this morning said that the agreement just reiterated the original letter sent from the OPA to TransCanada. As I said, the energy critic for the NDP said, “I don’t see a smoking gun.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The fact is your Premier, Kathleen Wynne, signed an arbitration agreement on behalf of cabinet. That is what led to the settlement. If the government had chosen to do nothing and allowed force majeure, or allowed that contract to end as it naturally would have in 2016, you would not have had to pay what you did.

I ask you again: How can you stand in this House today and say that you guys did what was best for the people of the province of Ontario when it came to the settlement of this contract?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a minute. I remind the member and all members to use either the title or their riding, please.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the question is directed to the activities of the Premier. This Premier, at the first opportunity, when she returned to the Legislature, reconvened the committee. Secondly, she directed all of her ministries—which had never been asked for before—to make documents available that were asked for by the committee. That resulted in well over 160,000 documents coming to the committee. The unprecedented offer from the Premier was to open up the documents and papers in the Premier’s office; I believe it was the first time in the history of this Parliament: 30,000 pages of documents from the Premier’s office.

She was open, she was transparent, she was upfront, she was honest and she showed tremendous leadership on this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Some leadership. It cost us \$685 million.

The point is, your member from Mississauga–Streetsville this morning at committee was trying to say that the auditor based all of her findings on her assumptions. The auditor, being a very clever person, knowing her job, said that was not the fact. In fact, her findings are based on facts. So it’s clear that your Premier and you as Minister of Energy, along with the rest of this government, are trying to basically not accept what the auditor had to say.

Why are you fighting what the auditor had to say and trying to say that these are all assumptions when, in fact, they’re all fact?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In the premise of his question he said that this cost us a lot of money. It did: \$675 million.

The Premier accepted responsibility for that and apologized for that.

But I will say, Mr. Speaker, that that \$675 million should be compared to several other decisions that were taken several months ago. Number one: The decision to renegotiate the Samsung contract removed \$3.7 billion from the rate base, compared to this number. The decision to remove domestic content removed \$1.9 billion from the rate base. That's \$5.6 billion that we've taken out of the rate base, and that more than covers that number, but it doesn't excuse that number.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Acting Premier. I'm sure the next Liberal election campaign ad came to me last night after the bombshell that was dropped this week. It goes something like this: The eHealth scandal, \$2 billion; the Ornge scandal, hundreds of millions of dollars; the gas plants scandal, \$1.1 billion; the Pan Am Games, priceless. There are some things in life that money can't buy, but if you are a Liberal in Ontario, there's always the taxpayer.

1100

Minister, when are you going to stop making Ontario people pay for your scandals and your incompetence? Will you call the non-confidence motion? Get a mandate from the people of Ontario before you misappropriate any more of taxpayers' money.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I go, I'm going to caution everyone that if we're going to dangerously go down a slippery slope of trying to say something indirectly that you can't say directly, I'll nail it right away. So let's be very cautious, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, I don't need any editorials.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, thank you, Speaker. The member opposite maybe wasn't around when his party was in power, so I think he needs to be reminded of some of the extraordinary legacy his party, when they were in power, left for the people of Ontario. The attempt to privatize Hydro One led to a \$19.5-billion—

Mr. John Yakabuski: We went to the people and we paid the price. End of story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need arm-chair quarterbacks. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Hydro One attempt to privatize cost Ontario taxpayers and ratepayers \$19.5 billion. We are still paying that off. Every time an Ontarian opens their hydro bill, they're paying for the follies of the PC Party. When they tried to privatize electricity, prices rose 30% in just 30 weeks. The record is crystal clear. To make it worse, some of us remember that they hid from the people of this province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please. Supplementarity?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, let me tell you the difference between what you are talking about and what we're talking about here. You've clearly lost the moral authority to govern in Ontario. Your government misappropriated \$1.1 billion—and here's the key—for partisan, political purposes. You treated the Ontario taxpayer like they were your own slush fund, like they were your own ATM.

Just because the NDP is prepared to prop you up and just because the NDP will support that kind of behaviour doesn't mean we will here. Just because the NDP is prepared to let you throw good money after bad at the Pan Am Games—they haven't learned their lesson; we have. We won't let it continue.

Minister, you shouldn't be allowed to spend one more red cent in this province. Will you call a non-confidence motion? Let the Ontario taxpayer decide once and for all if they're going to support this corrupt government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge will come to order. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek will come to order. And if he goes to his seat, I'll say it again.

Answer, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The testosterone here is a bit in overdrive, but let's try to reflect on the history of this province. When the PCs were in power, they had a deficit from the people of this province of \$5.6 billion. You talk about moral authority. They sold the 407 at a fire sale price.

But more importantly for me, Speaker, under their watch, one third of students dropped out of high school before they completed it. We had the longest surgical wait times in the country. We've gone from the worst to the first. When it comes to high school dropout rates, our kids are thriving. People are coming from around the world to find out how Ontario transformed their education system in one short decade.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Energy. The Premier has said over and over that mistakes were made; it's a shame about Oakville and Mississauga—and then you bungled the cost of the cancellation.

But an apology isn't much good if you turn around and do the same thing over again. Has the Premier learned those lessons, or is she currently repeating those same mistakes in St. Clair with the replacement for the Mississauga plant?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, reference is made to the Auditor General's report again, and I want to make reference to an Auditor General's report, but not the one that she just released. I want to talk about the public accounts that she released several weeks ago. The same

Auditor General confirmed that the public accounts for Ontario—for the first time in 12 years, the costs of provincial government declined, and we continue to be the only province that is bettering our deficit reduction targets. We have acted responsibly. We're continuing to act responsibly.

Mr. Speaker, if they're prepared to go to an election, let them start talking about their policy. Let them start talking about their leader, who in one week says he's going to cancel the wind contracts, and in the next week he says he's not going to cancel them. We don't know where he stands, Mr. Speaker, and I defy him—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It appears the minister isn't following this file.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister for Rural Affairs, come to order.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier said the government would start consulting before siting power plants, but Sarnia mayor Mike Bradley is quoted as saying, "This ... decision, we were not consulted on. They simply made the announcement, and we were told it was coming to Lambton county."

Local residents are starting to raise health issues. It's sort of like déjà vu all over again. The Premier seems to be making the same mistake—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, you're not helping, and if you go to your seat, I'll tell you the same thing.

Finish, please.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Does the minister realize that apologies don't count for much if you keep making the same mistake over and over?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The critic for the NDP wants to get into the quote game. I have a few quotes.

Mayor Hazel McCallion: "We have been opposing this power plant since 2004."

Sarnia Observer: "Our area accepts and welcomes these kinds of projects."

Sarnia Observer re St. Clair township mayor: "I told the minister the community would view it as a very positive thing for us all." That's the mayor, Mr. Speaker.

"Local tradespeople are glad to learn a natural gas plant will be constructed at the" Lennox generating station.

"It's been a slow summer for us.... This is very good news." That's the Sarnia Observer.

Mr. Speaker—a unanimous vote on the part of the Napanee council, accepting the plant. We have two communities, Mississauga and Oakville, who are happy that these plants have been moved, and we have two willing host communities who are happy to have them.

STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you may be aware, today is World Mental Health Day. Mental health is a growing concern amongst our young people in my riding of Ottawa South, especially our post-secondary students. With psychiatric disorders comprising 16% of all identified disabilities at our post-secondary institutions, we cannot sit idly by. As exams and the essay season heat up, the parents in our communities want to be sure that their kids have the support they need to succeed.

Can the minister please tell the House what the government is doing to provide support for post-secondary students struggling with mental health issues?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is right: This is an incredibly important issue. One in five Ontarians, which means one in five of our young students, experience some form of mental illness, such as anxiety, eating disorders, schizophrenia and depression, and 70% of mental illness is identified during the teenage years.

Imagine dealing not only with the stresses of day-to-day school life, not only with maybe being away from home for the first time in your life, but also having to deal with some form of mental illness.

We've rolled out a number of supports. In fact, our \$27-million youth mental health innovation fund has already announced over 20 new programs right across the province with our colleges and universities.

That's also why we recently announced our Good2Talk helpline, a free, confidential, anonymous service that offers professional counselling, mental health information and connections to local resources 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year—a very, very important service for our students.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1110

Mr. John Fraser: It's great to hear that the province is tackling mental health and investing in programs that will help our young people get access to the help they need to succeed. It is especially important to hear that students will have access to the Good2Talk helpline 24 hours a day and seven days a week. We must do everything we can to support our young people in all the ways they need and deserve.

However, I've also heard that the government is investing in 10 projects across the province that will provide further on-campus assistance and mental health programs. Parents and students alike can agree that these programs are just as necessary in the east as they are in Toronto, and they would like to be assured that institutions across the province are being considered.

Speaker, through you to the minister, has the government committed to any of these projects at the post-secondary institutions in Ottawa?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I think it's an excellent question. Absolutely, these projects are rolling out right across the province; I can assure the member of that. In fact, there have been two rounds, so far, of approval, so it's actually 20 projects: 10 announced last week and 10 announced in

the spring. A total of \$6.5 million so far has been invested.

One of my favourite projects, in fact, is at Carleton University, in partnership with the University of Ottawa, in the member's region, as well as in partnership with the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board. Carleton University and its partners have received \$640,000 over two years to work with and identify students who are at risk at the high school level, and then provide wraparound support services as they transfer into university. It's a groundbreaking program. It's very innovative, and I think that what it's going to lead to is better results for those students, right through to ensuring that those students, if they do suffer from some form of mental illness, don't lose a school year or worse.

This is a program we're very excited about. I'd like to thank all members from all parties—because I know that they all support these kinds of initiatives—for their support, and I'd particularly like to thank our partners in the colleges and universities for the work they're doing to roll them out.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: It must have been a pretty good Pan Am party last night, so I guess my question is to the Deputy Premier, Minister, all those foreign dignitaries you treated this week to your \$500,000 parties want to know if they will be safe for the TO2015 games. Your current one-line budget item for essential services, at \$235 million, is supposed to include the total security costs, but here are some comparative security costs for the last few multinational sporting events: London, \$1.6 billion; Vancouver, \$1 billion; and Turin, \$1.4 billion.

Minister, I hope you're not depending on cutting corners by granting special police powers to security guards to save your budget and keep Ontarians safe. Minister, what is the exact amount of the total security plan for the Pan Am Games? The total amount.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. The member opposite has been apprised of the ongoing deliberations regarding budgeting of the Pan Am Games for the last two years. He's well aware, from the outset, as to what is taking place and how it is going to be costed. He knows fully well—and I put it in the budget; I've also put it in our first-quarter results—some of the issues we have with regard to transportation and security.

More importantly, what was really shameful was that the members opposite chose not to receive delegations from across South America, people who came to our country. We are displaying Canada at its best—and Ontario—and they chose to dismiss them and to neglect them. These are people who are coming to invest in our province. We're hosting the games that we would want all of the world to recognize. They chose not to support Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It seems to me that the most investment is coming from the Ontario taxpayer, not from

the delegates that got paid thousands of dollars to fly here and be put up here in Toronto.

Several weeks ago, the TO2015 CEO met with our party leader and me, and, when pressed, he threw out another number about security: \$113 million for security. It wasn't clear if that was the total security budget embedded in the \$235 million for the essential services item, or if that is another one of your surprise budget items hidden off the Pan Am books somewhere. Either way, a Pan Am security source indicated that your security budget, whatever it is, has been well overblown already.

Your lack of planning is the biggest security risk to date, Minister. Have you buried extra money outside the games budget again, and how much exactly is the total security cost? Can you give me the number in the budget of the security costs—flat out, yes or no? Can you do it? What is it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have recognized the complexity of these games; that's why we're working in tandem with TO2015. It's also why we have taken the extra step to ensure that security is installed as necessary by hiring a number of security and other groups to support these games.

Let's also recognize the influx of the tremendous amount of tourism that's coming to this province, the 10,000 athletes and officials who are going to attend, the extraordinary amount of celebrations and enthusiasm and the pickup that is going to have for our province. It's tremendous.

More important than that is the legacy that is going to be created by all of the community centres, the athletes' villages, the athlete venues across southern Ontario for the benefit of future generations. They should be supporting that, Mr. Speaker. They should be standing for Ontario.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Acting Premier. I think it has been pretty well established that the Liberal government wasted over \$1 billion to guarantee the profits of a private gas company and to save a few seats around Mississauga and Oakville.

While they were doing that, they also decided to dump the ONTC infrastructure on which northerners rely. A year later, due to the united northern front, we've put a hold on that. But imagine our surprise when we come to find out that jobs that could be done in North Bay at the shops are still being outsourced to other countries, and our own shops aren't being allowed to bid.

Are private contracts, private companies, still more important to this government than good jobs in northern Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Orzietti: I appreciate the question from member opposite. The member opposite knows full well that the minister's advisory committee has been set up and recognizes that the status quo was no longer an op-

tion. I think everybody agrees with that, and they recognize that there needs to be a new plan to help strengthen transportation infrastructure in northern Ontario, something that has been an incredible challenge in this region. I want to assure the member opposite that we are committed to investing in transportation infrastructure in northern Ontario and in the region to ensure that northerners who need service and access to transportation get that service.

I'm working with the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. He is very acutely aware of these challenges and these issues, and he will continue to work with the local community to ensure the most effective solution for the region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, my question is to the Acting Premier. I think everyone is aware, especially northerners, that the minister's advisory committees are charged with the job of advising the minister of how to restructure and how to come up with a plan for the ONTC. I think we're all in agreement on that, but how can they come up with a plan when you tie the ONTC's hands and you don't allow them to bid on contracts to actually make money for the company?

You're spending money on lawyers—you're lawyering up—but you're not letting northerners actually try to rebuild their company. You are trying to save your reputations while we lose our jobs.

Hon. David Orazietti: The member knows full well that the Minister of Northern Development and Mines is very committed to addressing this issue in a way that meets the objectives and the realities of northern transportation challenges, and is committed to working with these communities. That's why this advisory group was set up. So while the member opposite is making some claims, there is an advisory group that we're going to be taking our advice from and working with to ensure the most effective solution is reached in this area. This is an acknowledgment that everyone recognizes that the status quo is not an option in this area. There has been a significant financial loss in the area with respect to the operation of the ONTC, and we're going to continue to work with the communities to find the best result.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Minister, this week marks Small Business Month across Canada, and it's a chance to highlight small businesses and the hard-working people who run them.

There are many small businesses in my riding of York South–Weston, such as Cristina's Antiques, Caplan's Appliances and the Golden Wheat Bakery, just to name a few, who are small business owners who are working to make it work for themselves and working to create local jobs in Ontario.

1120

There is always great fulfillment in running a successful small business, and it coincides with the govern-

ment's commitment to creating the right business climate to attract and support business.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government supporting small businesses across Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thanks to the member from York South–Weston for her question. She's a great advocate for small businesses in her community as well as in Ontario.

We've recently introduced Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act which, if passed, will ensure that 60,000 small businesses will pay less employer health tax and will eliminate that tax all together for 12,000 small businesses right across the province.

We've made funding commitments of over \$88 million to support businesses through our two regional economic development funds. Our work to cut red tape has eliminated over 80,000 regulatory burdens in the last five years, savings of more than \$265 million for businesses in Ontario. Of course, we've permanently cut the small business corporate income tax rate from 5.5% to 4.5% and eliminated the small business deduction surtax.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Minister, for the update.

Small businesses contribute so much to Ontario's economy. They are important partners for Ontario. They help build vibrant and strong communities, communities such as the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Vietnamese, the Somali and the Italian community. All of these communities have a strong presence in my riding, and, obviously, I continue to actively participate as much as I can in them.

I continue to receive, although, many questions from constituents about jobs created by small businesses, as well as broader questions about job creation as a whole across our province. Mr. Speaker, could the minister please provide me with an answer to take back to these communities about what our government is doing to help small business create good, meaningful jobs in my riding and in the rest of the province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member again for the follow-up question and the opportunity to speak to the employment component of this.

Mr. Speaker, small and medium-sized businesses represent over 99% of all businesses in our province, which means, of course, they are a highly significant source of employment for the people of Ontario. Communities across the province—rural, small-town and urban—benefit from these important jobs. As jobs minister, I know how important having a good, meaningful job is. Making it easier for small businesses to create jobs is an important element of the investments and supports we provide, supports like the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs, helping to bridge knowledge and experience to help entrepreneurs start new businesses, and our 57 small business enterprise centres right across the province helping to support small businesses and entrepreneurs as well.

We're also looking forward to the official launch of our youth jobs strategy in the coming weeks, which will obviously support young people and create more jobs.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. Member from Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: If I'd only known they cared.

Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, over the course of my time here and well before that, your government has been promising the residents of Thornhill and Vaughan a hospital. We have yet to see a hole in the ground, and the sign at the corner of Major Mackenzie and Jane is starting to look, well, tired and rusty and battered—sort of like your party.

Now, to further complicate matters, there appears to be a gaping hole in this story. Who has title to the 80 acres of land where the hospital is to be built? Both the city of Vaughan and a private corporation seem to have an interest.

My question is this: Does your ministry or the city of Vaughan hold clear title to construct a hospital on this 80-acre tract of land or have you left this or any part of it in the hands of a private corporation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Vaughan is a growing, thriving community, and the people of Vaughan and Thornhill deserve a hospital, and we're going to deliver a hospital to the people of Vaughan.

I want to thank the member from Vaughan, who, since before he was elected to this Legislature, has been a tireless advocate of that new hospital. And in fairness, I want to thank the member from Thornhill, who also has stood up and supported this infrastructure project, even though the party, I'm afraid, does not support hospital infrastructure. But nonetheless, the member opposite I think should drive by the site. There is a new sign that went up this week, celebrating the site of the future hospital, and I am very pleased that the largest single health care investment ever in Vaughan is the \$49.7-million—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. And while her answer is finished, I want to be able to hear the rest of the answer, and the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is not helping.

Supplementary, please.

Mr. Peter Shurman: If only a sign could offer dialysis.

There are few things more important to a community than a hospital, and the residents of Thornhill and Vaughan are restless, Minister. For the past five years, Vaughan residents have been paying additional taxes to

the tune of \$16 million that have been collected since 2012, and yet no date to break ground or start construction. This is just wrong.

A previous health minister and a previous finance minister, in fact, turned taxpayer dollars over to a private corporation in aid of future hospital activities. Where did that go? There is a lack of clarity and a lack of transparency and oversight here, and we both know that.

Now it is unclear who the land belongs to. Minister, you know as well as I do that a hospital cannot be built on private land. So, Minister, please end the ambiguity. Who owns the land and when will the hospital be built?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

I'm going to ask—because I wanted him to put the question, but I'm going to ask the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound not to heckle when he's asking the question.

Answer, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm feeling this might be a—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So now I'll stand up and tell the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: You're warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ask the member from Halton about that.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'm so happy to have this question, because I'm happy to assure the member opposite and the people of Vaughan that the construction is scheduled to begin in 2015. We are working with all partners to make sure we proceed with this site, and let's imagine what's going to be there, Speaker. We will have emergency and surgical services; operating rooms; acute, in-patient, intensive-care beds; diagnostic imaging; specialized ambulatory clinics.

The people of Vaughan deserve this hospital. The member from Vaughan has been a fearless advocate for this hospital. Construction will begin in 2015, and we're moving ahead.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Cindy Forster: This Liberal government is notorious for making bad bets and losing big. But it's easy to wager when you're not playing with your own money. When—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, I need to ask the member to put the question—to who?

Ms. Cindy Forster: The Acting Premier.

I'll start again. This Liberal government is notorious for making bad bets and losing big, but it's easy to wager when you're not playing with your own money.

This week, the Auditor General confirmed that this government gambled away \$1 billion to save a few Liberal seats in Oakville and Mississauga. But by scrapping the racetrack slots in Fort Erie, you gambled with the

livelihoods of many people in Fort Erie and track communities across this province.

The Premier says she's sticking up for rural Ontario, but what is she doing to make sure the final race of the season isn't the last race in the 116-year history of the Fort Erie tracks?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, this government put in place a panel of three very distinguished former cabinet ministers of the province of Ontario: Mr. Snobelen, Mr. Buchanan, Mr. Wilkinson. The Premier, over a month ago, issued a letter to the panel to come up with a five-year plan to make sure that horse racing in Ontario is sustainable and transparent, and to get fans to the tracks.

1130

We're moving forward with that plan. The plan is going to be complete in the next little while, and we'll have the opportunity to make sure that there's a horse racing industry in the province of Ontario, to be sustained into the future for the years to come.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: The Liberals have a bad habit of scheduling a press conference just before a long weekend. Let's hope it's no coincidence that the horse racing transition panel's report should finally come down tomorrow. The horse racing industry has been waiting for good news, for a change, from this government. If this government can blow \$1 billion on gas plants, surely it can spare some change for the horse racing industry.

When those people who rely on the horse racing industry sit down for turkey this weekend, will they be giving thanks or will they be worried about an uncertain future for horse racing in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: We've already made a lot of progress in the horse racing industry in the province of Ontario. We have committed up to \$180 million to support the industry over the next three years as it adapts to a smaller and more sustainable model.

But let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: John Snobelen, a former very distinguished member from that caucus over there who served in cabinet, said that the SART program wasn't transparent and wasn't sustainable. He has been the advocate for a new five-year plan in the province of Ontario to make sure we have horse racing on a sustainable basis for the years to come—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question?

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This past Monday was recognized as United Nations World Habitat Day. Countries and communities around the world highlighted the need for housing for the world's most vulnerable population. Though it might be tempting to look outside Canada's borders, the need for affordable housing exists right here in Ontario. I know that I have heard about this urgent need from all segments of my community, whether they are old or young, whether they are new to Ontario or have lived here for many generations, because at the end

of the day, my constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt, like every Ontarian, need and deserve a place they call home and take refuge from the world.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can she please tell the House what our government is doing to invest in affordable housing to ensure every Ontarian is not left out in the cold?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank my colleague for this very timely question. I'd like to recognize the importance of World Habitat Day because we believe all Ontarians deserve to have a safe and secure place to call home. Having a place to call home is often the first step out of poverty. It's the first step to allow our most vulnerable a chance to recognize and realize new opportunities, allowing them a better quality of life.

That's why our government has invested \$3 billion in our affordable housing strategy since 2003. That \$3 billion is more than any previous government. This investment means that 263,000 existing units have been repaired or renovated and that 17,000 new affordable housing units have been created—new affordable housing such as 8 Chichester Place, where our government, along with our federal partners, invested over \$25 million to create 210 new units for low-income seniors and people with disabilities. Our government will continue to invest in affordable housing that will strengthen communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to thank the minister for her answers. I'm sure my constituents are pleased to hear that we are investing in housing and supporting vulnerable communities.

Though we have made significant investments in affordable housing, Toronto and communities across Ontario need stable, predictable funding for social and affordable housing. This need stretches across Canada. That is why Claude Dauphin, the president of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, has called on the federal government—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, last time.

Ms. Soo Wong: —to take up their critical role alongside the provinces and municipalities to restore balance to Canada's housing system.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could she please explain to the House what our government is doing to ensure that we have a long-term partner in the federal government to ensure that Ontario cities and towns have the predictable housing funding that they need?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Investing in housing is a societal issue. It takes three levels of government—municipal, provincial and federal—at the table to solve this pressing issue. Although our government was encouraged by the decision of the federal government to extend its commitment to affordable housing in their budget, I am worried that the federal government's commitment to affordable housing will actually evaporate over the next 20 years.

That is why our government will closely watch the upcoming throne speech from our federal partners with a close eye to ensuring that they will live up to their moral

obligation to invest in more affordable social housing, because investing in affordable housing is investing in Ontario's infrastructure and its people. These investments pay dividends, creating jobs for Ontarians while continuing to provide housing for Ontario's most vulnerable for decades to come.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question today is for the Minister of Energy. On Tuesday, you were in my riding of Huron—Bruce to visit Bruce Power. In your travels, you had to have seen the 158 turbines already up in that community. By the way, yesterday, the Liberals' secret Samsung project near Kincardine was just approved.

Minister, you just blew \$1 billion on large energy projects in Oakville and Mississauga, because those communities didn't want them. Your Premier said you need to learn from past mistakes, but sadly, your government hasn't. The secret Samsung deal means that over and above the 158 turbines already up, another 90 turbines, 100 feet taller than the ones already in place, are going to be inflicted on unwilling host communities in the municipality of Kincardine and the county of Bruce.

Minister, can you explain to the residents of the Kincardine area why, right from the start, you are choosing to disrespect their unwilling stance?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are some people who are on the edge, and I can add others.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think the member is talking about existing wind contracts.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Maybe the member from Dufferin—Caledon.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The member is speaking about existing wind contracts. The leader of the Conservative Party, several weeks ago, said that he would respect existing wind contracts; that he wouldn't tamper with them. Then he went to the International Plowing Match and he said that it is open to change them, deal with them or amend them. We've learned that you don't cancel existing contracts, if nothing else. She is suggesting that we change existing binding contracts.

What is important is that we have had a renewable policy that has eliminated dirty coal-burning generation to virtually zero in this province, making this province healthier, and that party opposes it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary, and I know the member will listen.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Minister, you know the truth always comes out, so why don't you just come out with your hands up and give it up before the AG completes a report on the multi-billion-dollar boondoggle this Liberal failed green energy scheme is going to be proven to be? Just come out now.

Samsung's Arnow project alone is approved to generate 180 megawatts. This is translated into \$1.2 billion, just for those 180 megawatts, all for electricity Ontario doesn't need. You have a chance to do right here, Minister, but you and all of your caucus, if you continue to proceed—and even the NDP, for propping up your awful policies that are crippling Ontario—need to be ashamed. Your green energy plan is criminal. Once and for all, will you man up, admit that your scheme has failed and call an immediate moratorium on all wind projects?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I would like clarification from the Leader of the Opposition in view of the fact that they are asking for an election. Let them say whether they will cancel existing wind contracts. We have renewable energy in this province because that government—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Come out with your hands up, Bob. Cuff him!

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton might not know this, but I don't have to wait for the clock to expire to have anyone leave. It could be at any time.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is that a challenge?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Then I would recommend to her not to say anything.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We've invested in clean, renewable energy in this province because that government increased dirty coal-burning generation, up to 25% of our total generation. We have reduced that to almost zero. The former Minister of Energy from that party over there, Mr. John Baird, is down in Washington taking credit for the fact that we have reduced coal in this country—meaning in this province. He is taking credit for the federal government on something we have done here. That Minister of Energy was increasing dirty coal-burning generation.

ANNUAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table the 2012-13 annual report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, entitled *Serving the Public*.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would also like to ask my friends to join me in celebrating and thanking our pages, as this is their last day.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank them for their very, very fine work.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask the House to join me in welcoming a good friend of mine. Faisal Mirza is a leading criminal defence lawyer as well as an appellate lawyer. Please welcome him to Queen's Park.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'd just like to point out to everyone that we're being joined in the members' east gallery by a former member of this House, Mario Racco, a former member for Thornhill.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not stealing my thunder—but as is the tradition, the Speaker will introduce the former member from Thornhill, Mr. Mario Racco from the 38th Parliament. Welcome, Mr. Racco.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

KITCHENER GIRLS' SOCCER

Mr. Michael Harris: Speaker, I'd like to commend the Kitchener Spirit 99A under-14 girls' team for their impressive win at the Ontario Cup last month. The girls showed incredible resolve to win the game in the closing moments, scoring twice in less than two minutes to secure the championship.

I would like to also commend the coaches for their fine work in preparing this team for its successful run: head coach Vince, general manager Joanne, and assistant coaches John and Karim. All deserve our appreciation for their hard work and determination to make this under-14 girls' team a champion one.

I would also like to mention the players—McKenna, Kirsten, Gabrielle, Olivia, Sayan, Christine, Bridget, Turney, Alexandra, Stephanie, Estevana, Krissia, Isabelle, Gabriella and Morgan—for their hard work and tenacity for sticking with the game to the very end and never giving up.

I had the opportunity last Thursday to take in a practice as the girls were preparing for the National Club Championships, and I saw the perseverance and the determination of those young girls. I also want to congratulate and thank their parents for sticking with them and showing that they're also supporting their hard work, both on the field and off it.

Of course, I'd like to wish them the best of luck in the National Club Championships Under 14 Cup now taking place in Lethbridge, Alberta. They have already won their first game yesterday, and they're well on their way to challenging for the national under-14 girls' title.

Go, Spirit girls, and good luck in the national championships.

GREENPEACE SHIP

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, Paul Ruzycski is a native of Port Colborne, Ontario. He's an honest and committed man. He's a sailor on the Greenpeace ship Arctic Sunrise. Along with Alexandre Paul of Quebec, he and 28 other people were recently arrested by Russian authorities for peaceful entry onto a Russian oil-drilling platform in Arctic waters—international waters. They are facing piracy charges.

Paul, Alexandre and their colleagues were trying to bring world attention to the threat of global warming and the huge risk to the Arctic from oil drilling. President Putin has publicly said that everyone knows no act of piracy occurred, yet his officials seem to be acting contrary to the President's directions.

I add my voice to that of millions and call on President Putin and Russian authorities to release Paul Ruzycski, Alexandre Paul and the others on bail and to drop these serious charges. I hope others will add their voices.

Russia is a great and powerful nation. These charges are not justified and Russia is great enough to abandon them.

EID AL-ADHA

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: On behalf of myself, the Liberal caucus and the entire government of Ontario and, indeed, all members of the Legislature, I'd like to wish all Muslims in Ontario and, indeed, all Ontarians, an Eid Mubarak celebration of the Eid festival.

The week of October 16 marks Eid al-Adha, a holiday celebrated by a billion-plus Muslims worldwide. This special occasion is a reminder to Muslims of Abraham's sacrifice of his son as an act of obedience to God. To celebrate this, Muslims across the province and the world come together in their communities for prayer, and will be sharing the delights and fruits of their hard labour by feasting with family—no doubt, overeating—with friends, neighbours and, most importantly, by giving to charity.

This is also the time when millions will be performing the Hajj, the annual pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, performing various rituals and asking for atonement.

This special holiday and its values are representative of the diversity that the Ontario Liberal Party stands for: togetherness based on shared values—"common ground," the phrase which you're all attempting to roll into the phrase "one Ontario."

Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, the government of Ontario, once again, happy Eid and Hajj season. Eid Mubarak.

ALICE MUNRO

Ms. Laurie Scott: I am so pleased to rise today, on behalf of the Progressive Conservative members, to extend our congratulations to Canadian author Alice Munro, who just this morning was named the winner of

the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature. Ms. Munro is the first Canadian woman and the 13th woman ever to receive this very prestigious award. She joins a long list of acclaimed authors who have shared in this honour since the Nobel Prize in Literature was created in 1901.

Originally from Wingham, Ontario—Ms. Munro's work focuses on the lives, thoughts and feelings of women living in rural communities. Today, she has garnered the title "master of the contemporary short story."

This announcement comes at an appropriate time, as October is Women's History Month in Canada, a time to celebrate the achievements and impacts women have made in Canadian history.

Alice Munro's literary works and the international recognition she has received are certainly something to be celebrated. Great literature is an art form that enriches our lives and our culture, and we are fortunate that so many exceptional authors call Canada home.

All members of the Ontario Legislature and Ontarians across the province, I'm sure, are very proud of Alice Munro's outstanding achievement.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I rise to speak today about Ontario's frail social safety net. People who are concerned about our social safety net and this government's lack of action on poverty reduction are taking action. They will be out in numbers on the lawn of Queen's Park on October 17, the United Nations day to eradicate poverty.

In fact, out on the lawn today, we have ISARC leading an interfaith prayer vigil challenging austerity and seeking dignity for all Ontarians.

The Stitching Our Own Social Safety Net campaign will unveil a collective art piece over 175 feet in length. The artwork has been stitched together using contributed art pieces from more than 500 individuals and groups across the province who share this concern.

Why is it that the government has the lowest social spending per capita of any province in Canada? Why did this government lower corporate taxes to among the lowest in North America? We need more money to pay for programs to lift people out of poverty. And why did the Liberal government cut crucial spending such as the Community Start-up and Maintenance Benefit?

The campaign to stitch our social safety net has five key demands:

- restore social assistance rates to the levels they were before the Harris government;

- raise the minimum wage to \$14 an hour;

- 1% of the Ontario budget to be spent on sustainable, safe, affordable and quality housing;

- fully funded dental services for all social assistance recipients and low-income workers; and

- lower tuition fees.

I absolutely agree and urge all members to support them, and to go out and pray along with ISARC.

ALICE MUNRO

Ms. Helena Jaczek: This morning, we received the delightful news that our fellow Ontarian, author Alice Munro, received the 2013 Nobel Prize in Literature, making her the first Canadian and 13th woman to do so. The Nobel Prize adds to Ms. Munro's long list of literary accomplishments, which include three Governor General's Awards, two Giller Prizes and one Trillium award.

Known primarily as an author of short stories, she has often been referred to as one of the greatest contemporary writers of fiction, and as our generation's Chekhov.

Born in the southwestern Ontario town of Wingham, Alice Munro has never forgotten her roots. Most of her stories take place in small towns like Wingham, and so her style of writing is known as southern Ontario gothic.

Having read many of her works, I can personally attest that her books capture the imagination of readers and speak to the reality of our great province, while her characters take the form of people that we meet and interact with each day.

1310

As this award has demonstrated, her works have been celebrated, not just in Ontario, but across the world. Her stories have been translated into almost 20 languages and offer the world an accurate, everlasting portrait of life in Ontario.

On behalf of all Ontarians, I would like to congratulate Alice Munro on receiving this prestigious award.

HIGHWAY FUNDING

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: When this government cancelled the Connecting Link Program, they did it suddenly, without warning, without consultation and without any concern for the impact on municipalities, especially small municipalities. Far too often, that's the way this government operates; just ask anyone in the horse racing industry.

Connecting Link had existed since 1927. It acknowledged that the province should bear primary responsibility for the cost of maintaining provincial highways. It acknowledged that municipalities can't pay for highways that serve traffic that is, for the most part, not local. I ask the Minister of Transportation, what does he think Toronto and Mississauga might say if he suddenly told them to start paying for the 401?

Over a year ago, I wrote to the Premier to convey the extreme disappointment of the municipalities I represent over the government's unilateral decision to cancel the program. In response, multiple ministers of transportation have bragged about the government's MIII program as if it were somehow a replacement for Connecting Link. It's not, and the minister should admit it's not.

This week, we learned of the government's crass political decision to cancel two power plants in the GTA, which will cost a billion dollars. They blew a billion dollars to buy five Liberal seats and they scrapped Connecting Link, a program that cost a tiny fraction of that and a program that was working. It's shameful, it's

inexcusable and it's totally unacceptable to the people I represent.

DENTURISTS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: We are joined today by visitors from the Denturist Association of Ontario. Denturists across our province work hard every day to restore healthy smiles to Ontarians. The care that they provide not only helps to restore function to their patients, but also provides them with the confidence they need and deserve. But let's sink our teeth into the real issue here: An important component of providing quality care is ensuring correct fit. Most denturists fabricate, repair or adjust dentures in-house after seeing their patients chair-side.

Since 1974, denturists have been regulated health professionals like doctors, dentists, physiotherapists and pharmacists. When concerns were raised about their college's operations and finances, the Ministry of Health stepped in to ensure that the profession continued to be governed by a strong and responsible self-regulator. I am pleased to say that, with help from the profession, the college's turnaround has been remarkable and it has come a long way under its new leadership.

Healthy smiles are a critical component of a healthy lifestyle, and I know that folks in my community of Vaughan are happy to know that they can find these quality health care services close to home.

I want to take a moment to thank all denturists across Ontario for the remarkable work they do every day in our province.

If I could also add, with my remaining time on the clock, I believe today is the sixth anniversary for those elected to this particular Legislature back in 2007. So to all members on all sides of the House who were elected on this day six years ago, happy sixth anniversary.

LOW WATER LEVELS

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today on behalf of businesses, marinas and homeowners in my riding to reiterate concern over low water levels in Georgian Bay and the impact that continues to have on my constituents and people throughout Ontario. In May, I rose in the House to apprise the government of the urgency of the problems facing marinas and other small businesses along Georgian Bay. The following week, I met with the Minister of Natural Resources about this issue. It's now October, five months later, and what has the government done? Nothing. The town of Wasaga Beach is still waiting to hear back on a mere request for an environmental assessment to dredge the mouth of the Nottawasaga River. Once obtained, the EA will then take years to complete. By then, I can guarantee that the marine and tourism industries will be decimated. Why is this issue not a priority for this government?

Last month, at the request of Stop the Drop, I wrote to all the local service clubs along my part of Georgian Bay to ask them to get involved with the Stop the Drop

Mayors' Challenge and to produce an account of the impact of low water levels on their communities. Together, Stop the Drop and the mayors around Georgian Bay are reaching out to citizens and asking them to come forward and tell their stories with pictures illustrating the impact of low water levels and estimates of the costs that those citizens have had to bear. I encourage all members of the service clubs and everybody to get involved with this outstanding initiative to raise awareness on this very important issue, and I encourage this government to get working with our federal partners and, in the meantime, provide short-term relief for the many residences and businesses adversely affected by low water levels on the Great Lakes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. It is now time for reports by committees.

The member from Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Speaker, earlier today the Minister of Energy made an announcement in the scrum about cutting \$10 billion from the funding of nuclear. It wasn't appropriate for the minister to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, that's not a point of order. He can say what he needs to say out there. That's not an impact on the House itself.

It is reports by committees. Reports by committees?

A point of order, the member from Mississauga East-Cooksville.

VISITORS

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I'd just like to take the opportunity to recognize two monks in the Legislature. They were part of the Buddhist heritage day, and their names are Monk Tenzin Lampa and Monk Galo Gala from the Karma Sonam Dargye Ling temple.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENHANCING PATIENT CARE AND PHARMACY SAFETY (STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT) ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AFIN D'AMÉLIORER LES SOINS AUX MALADES ET LA SÉCURITÉ DES PHARMACIES

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / *Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister for a short statement.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements, Speaker.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 50 and 52 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Carried.
Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding committee membership.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated February 20, 2013, the membership of the following committees, effective 12:01 a.m., October 11, is as follows:

The Standing Committee on Estimates: Laura Albanese, Mike Colle, Joe Dickson, Amrit Mangat, Steve Clark, Rob Leone, Jerry Ouellette, Taras Natyshak, Michael Prue;

The Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs: Steven Del Duca, Kevin Flynn, Mitzie Hunter, Soo Wong, Victor Fedeli, Douglas Holyday, Monte McNaughton, Catherine Fife, Michael Prue;

The Standing Committee on General Government: Donna Cansfield, Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla, John Fraser, Michael Harris, Laurie Scott, Jeff Yurek, Sarah Campbell, Peggy Sattler;

The Standing Committee on Government Agencies: Laura Albanese, Lorenzo Berardinetti, Rick Bartolucci, Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece, Lisa Thompson, Percy Hatfield, Monique Taylor;

The Standing Committee on Justice Policy: Bob Delaney, Steven Del Duca, Phil McNeely, Shafiq Qaadri, Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren, Rob Milligan, Teresa Armstrong, Jonah Schein;

The Standing Committee on Public Accounts: Lorenzo Berardinetti, Helena Jaczek, Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely, Toby Barrett, Norm Miller, Jerry Ouellette, France Gélinas, Jagmeet Singh;

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The Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills: Donna Cansfield, Dipika Damerla, John Fraser, Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls, Bill Walker, Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof;

The Standing Committee on Social Policy: Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon, Helena Jaczek, Ted Chudleigh, Ernie Hardeman, Rod Jackson, Cheri DiNovo, Paul Miller; and

The Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly: Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack, Vic Dhillon, Amrit Mangat, Garfield Dunlop, Lisa MacLeod, Todd Smith, Cindy Forster, Michael Mantha.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe the House has heard the motion. All in favour—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. I'm going to have to make that change, so let me sit down for a moment, please.

With the understanding of John O'Toole versus Jerry Ouellette in public accounts—

Mr. John O'Toole: He's on the first committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He's on the first committee.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. Do we have agreement? Agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Motions? The member from Simcoe—Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent for this House to sit next week; that notwithstanding standing order 6(a), the House shall meet on Tuesday, October 15, Wednesday, October 16 and Thursday, October 17, 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe—Grey is seeking unanimous consent for sittings next week. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Motions? Motions?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm hearing heckling in the middle of motions.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HOSPITAL PHARMACIES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce legislation that, if passed, would amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act to give the Ontario College of Pharmacists the necessary authority to license hospital pharmacies.

Before I go any further, Speaker, I would like to recognize the efforts of Suzanne McGurn, the assistant deputy minister for our health human resources strategy division, and her team. It is because of her hard work and dedication that I am able to bring this proposed legislation forward today. Thank you, Suzanne and your team.

Our government is taking action on our commitment to put into effect the recommendations made public by Dr. Jake Thiessen as a result of his review of Ontario's cancer drug system this past August.

You will recall that in March, Cancer Care Ontario advised us that two chemotherapy drugs used at four Ontario hospitals had been diluted. As a result, patients received a lower dose of drugs than was prescribed to treat their cancer. Mr. Speaker, when this happened, we made a promise to patients that we would do everything we can to ensure incidents like this would not happen again. My government took this incident very seriously, which is why we appointed Dr. Thiessen to get answers about how this happened and what needed to be done to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Dr. Thiessen's review highlighted a number of issues that need to be addressed. Among them was a concern that medication management and processing systems in hospital pharmacies were not standardized across the province. Although the College of Pharmacists currently has the authority to inspect community pharmacies, they do not have the power to inspect hospital pharmacies, leaving that responsibility to the hospital itself.

Even though hospital pharmacies were not found to be the cause of the particular incident last March, out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of protecting patients, Dr. Thiessen recommended that the college also be empowered to inspect hospital premises. This would allow for a consistent standard and mandatory compliance of operations when they have the potential to put patients' safety at risk.

Our government has accepted all of the recommendations to improve the safety of Ontario's hospital drug supply system, and we are continuing to work closely with the college, hospitals, Health Canada and other health partners to implement them.

My ministry has established a task force composed of government and stakeholder representatives to oversee the implementation of 11 of the 12 recommendations. The 12th recommendation, related to the college's ability to license all pharmacies operating within Ontario's hospitals, is not currently covered under legislation; hence these proposed amendments.

First, we're proposing to amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, which is the statute that currently gives the college the authority to license and inspect pharmacies in the community. The act already sets out the necessary framework the college needs to perform inspections, provide quality assurance monitoring and enforce licensing requirements.

Second, our proposal would build in regulation-making powers for the government to extend the college's oversight of pharmacies in other settings, if that

need is identified in the future. This mechanism would facilitate potential expansion of the college's oversight without the need for further amendments to legislation.

Speaker, I would like to convey to this House and the people of our province that we've been working very closely with the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Hospital Association on these amendments, and will continue to do so. Both organizations support the licensing proposal for hospital pharmacies and have expressed keen interest in working together to develop the necessary standards to enable the new licensing regime if legislative amendments are passed.

At the same time, I'm introducing additional amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, and the Public Hospitals Act to strengthen oversight which seeks to better protect patients.

The chemotherapy underdosing incident and other situations have highlighted the importance of ensuring that health system entities, such as health regulatory colleges, are able to share information and coordinate responses in order to more effectively address future incidents that could pose risks to patients.

The public expects regulators and other health care entities to be able to work seamlessly together to improve their response where patient care may be compromised and so, today, I'm proposing to:

(1) enable health regulatory colleges to more readily share information with public health authorities;

(2) permit regulatory colleges to share information with the hospital where it was obtained by a college's investigator;

(3) require a hospital or employer to report to regulatory colleges if a regulated health professional has voluntarily restricted his or her practice or privileges because of concerns regarding the member's conduct or practice;

(4) allow the government to move more quickly to appoint a college supervisor in order to address any serious concerns regarding the quality of a college's governance and management; and

(5) provide health regulatory colleges the flexibility to focus their investigation of complaints to those matters that could constitute professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

I would like to thank the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Hospital Association for working with us so diligently over the years, and especially this past spring and summer. Together, we investigated what occurred in the chemotherapy underdosing incident and have proposed measures to ensure that something like this does not happen again.

These proposed amendments will go a long way towards reducing the possibility of such an incident occurring in the future. I only hope that the measures we are taking will provide patients and their families some level of comfort in knowing that steps are being taken to ensure an incident like this doesn't happen again.

With the help of health regulatory colleges, the proposed amendments will enable a more rapid and integrat-

ed response to any potential future incidents and will enhance communication among health care entities that are responsible for patient safety.

Speaker, I urge all members to support these proposed amendments.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It is my pleasure today to rise to recognize October as Women's History Month.

I, too, would like to start by congratulating Alice Munro—we've heard it here today—on winning the Nobel Prize for literature today. Ms. Munro, of course, is well known for her short stories, which were often based in Ontario and focused on the experiences of women and girls in smaller communities. She is the first Canadian-based writer to receive this award. This is a tremendous achievement for her and ties in perfectly as we celebrate the accomplishments of all women today.

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Tomorrow is also International Day of the Girl, and I understand that Malala Yousafzai is a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. This young woman has been a courageous ambassador for the right of all girls to receive an education since she suffered a brutal attack last year. I wish her all the best of luck tomorrow and commend her on her tremendous bravery and advocacy.

I'm proud to celebrate today, and throughout this month, the steady progress women have made in Ontario. This is a time to thank the strong leadership from all corners of the province that made this progress possible.

I encourage everyone to view the new permanent exhibition, entitled "A Remarkable Assembly: Women at Queen's Park," at the east end of the main hallway. I'd like to thank the Clerk's office for honouring all the women who have contributed to this province's history: women like Agnes Macphail and Rae Luckock, who in 1943 were the first two female MPPs in Ontario.

I would also like to draw the House's attention to the historical timeline on the website of the Ontario Women's Directorate, which highlights key events that have made a difference in the lives of women in our province. This year, the Ontario Women's Directorate is marking 30 years as an influence in advancing women's equality in the province.

A few of the directorate's many achievements over the years are worth bringing to the attention of this House. In 1989, the directorate launched a series of advertisements that brought public attention to the issue of wife abuse in Ontario. Several years later, groundbreaking domestic and sexual violence action plans, released respectively in 2004 and 2011, engaged community partners to take action to end violence against women, and that progress continues today, with programs designed to increase the economic independence of Ontario women.

Under our new micro-lending program, more than 630 low-income women will receive business-readiness support and more than 170 women will receive a micro-loan to start their own businesses over the next two years.

This new program is in addition to the Women in Skilled Trades and Information Technology initiative, which has provided thousands of women with specialized workplace training to help them find jobs and advance in their careers.

During Women's History Month, we also recognize Persons Day. History tells us that as recently as 84 years ago, I, as a woman, would not be standing in this House today. Fast forward to today, where women enjoy full voting rights and equality rights. Now I serve with 29 other extremely impressive female members who are making Ontario a better place to live for all.

I'm also very proud to acknowledge that I serve under the first female Premier in our province's history. That is a strong record of achievement, but we all know that challenges remain. One area we're focusing on this year is women in leadership. Women make up half of Ontario's workforce and more than half of our post-secondary graduates, but are still under-represented in leadership positions and on boards of directors. Women only account for 14.5% of board members of Canada's 500 largest companies by revenue. This is a figure that has hardly moved in the last decade.

We've asked the Ontario Securities Commission to undertake public consultations to see how we can encourage and support firms in increasing the representation of women in corporate leadership. These consultations are currently under way, and we look forward to receiving the findings and recommendations.

The theme for this year's 30th anniversary of the Ontario Women's Directorate is, "Celebrate, Remember, Look Forward." Let's celebrate the contributions and accomplishments of women in Ontario, let's remember women who were leaders and made our province what it is today and let's look forward to more progress for women.

This House has my commitment to continue to work towards equality for all Ontario girls and women.

I invite everyone to join me later this afternoon for our 30th anniversary—in committee rooms 228 and 230.

HOSPITAL PHARMACIES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to respond very briefly to the statement made by the Minister of Health in introducing the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act a few moments ago. This, of course, arose out of the tragic chemotherapy underdosing incident, and also out of a report rendered by Dr. Jake Thiessen, which contained a number of excellent recommendations.

This act follows up on recommendation number 12, which recommends and authorizes the Ontario College of Pharmacists to inspect and license hospital pharmacies. Currently, they only have the ability to do so with respect to community pharmacies, so I think this is an important step forward.

I literally have just come back from a briefing by ministry officials—and I would like to thank the Minister of Health for arranging that—so I can't comment in any

great detail. But I would certainly say that if there is anything that will improve and enhance Ontario's hospital drug supply system and enhance patient safety, that should be given very serious consideration, and anything that will prevent anything like the chemotherapy under-dosing incident from happening again should certainly be supported.

The bill also goes a little bit further than Dr. Thiessen's original recommendations, in enabling a quick response to any potential future incidents, and also enables the Ontario College of Pharmacists and other health regulatory colleges to provide information to hospitals and public health authorities under specific circumstances.

I understand that the Ontario College of Pharmacists as well as the Ontario Hospital Association have had significant input to the crafting of this bill, and I certainly look forward to future discussions with them and with other stakeholders as we move forward to second reading of this bill.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment, Mr. Speaker.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise today, on behalf of PC members, to acknowledge Women's History Month and the 30th anniversary of the Ontario Women's Directorate, as well as Persons Day, which falls in October—a lot of celebrations.

As you know, October is recognized as Women's History Month in Canada. During this month, we celebrate the contributions that women and girls have made to Canadian history and the lasting impacts these contributions have had on our lives today. Especially in the last few decades, Canadian women have made outstanding achievements in the fields of science, engineering, politics, business, athletics, medicine, education and more.

My own mother, Betty Scott, is up for the extraordinary business leader award for Kawartha Lakes, nominated with a lot of strong leaders from the Kawartha Lakes area. That's on October 24, so we'll see; at 85 years old, she may be able to receive the award for extraordinary business leader.

This year's theme for Women's History Month is "Canadian Women Pioneers: Inspiring change through ongoing leadership."

Women have broken through many barriers and pushed through glass ceilings to become leaders in every sector.

It was in 1983 that the Ontario Women's Directorate was established, under the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, and Robert Welch was appointed as Ontario's first-ever minister responsible for women's issues.

You might think it strange now, that the first minister responsible for women's issues was a man; however, in 1983, there were only seven women MPPs serving in the Ontario Legislature, less than 6% of the members at the

time. Today, I am proud to be part of the group of 30 women MPPs now making up 28% of the Legislature. We not only represent our constituents, but we also represent Ontario's 6.8 million women and girls.

Much has changed for women in Ontario since 1983—not just in terms of elected representatives—but still the struggle for equality has not yet ended in Ontario, and women deserve to have their concerns heard loud and clear.

As the critic for the Ontario Women's Directorate, I am pleased that this outlet has been able to bring these concerns to the fore for 30 years.

I am happy to have had the opportunity in the Legislature to speak on Women's History Month and the 30th anniversary of the Women's Directorate, and to say that we are all moving forward together.

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I am happy to respond to the minister responsible for women's issues and to add, on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, our congratulations to the Ontario Women's Directorate, our acknowledgement of Women's History Month and, of course, of Persons Day as well.

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One of the things in that slogan from the Ontario Women's Directorate is about remembering. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, I do remember. We women do remember that the achievements that we've made haven't really been with the help of government, and this administration has been no different.

Here's the reality of women's experience in the province today. First of all, on pay equity: This government has done absolutely nothing for pay equity. We currently make 28% less than men. In fact, I have a little motion on the order paper declaring April 9 to be Pay Equity Day because that's how long women have to work just to catch up to be even with men. Again, this government has done nothing on that.

Poverty follows women into retirement. Women 65 and over are twice as likely as men to be poor. Sixty percent of minimum wage earners are women. Seven out of 10 part-time workers are women.

By the way, it was our \$10 minimum wage campaign that forced the government to raise the minimum wage back in 2008, and five years later, the minimum wage is still the same. That's disgraceful because it affects women.

Victim Services Toronto: I've spoken about this agency so often in this House. They deal with women who have suffered abuse and who are escaping abuse. They're the largest in Ontario, and they haven't received a raise in 20 years. In 20 years, their funding has been flatlined, 10 years under this administration.

This government also cut the Community Start-Up and Maintenance Benefit. That helps women escaping abuse to try to relocate to a new place. That funding has

been cut. That directly affects women. Without a replacement for that support, countless women have been trapped in abuse.

So yes, we remember, we women, and yes, we look forward—not to talk, but actually to action finally. We challenge this government: After 10 years, do something for women.

HOSPITAL PHARMACIES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to add a few words on the proposed legislation that was presented by the Minister of Health today: Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety.

First, I will say that I'm quite happy that they recognize the value of oversight—because, basically, what this does, is it allows the College of Pharmacists to have oversight of hospital pharmacies. So I applaud that. This is something good. But it's kind of like we're looking in the rear-view mirror rather than looking ahead.

If you really want to make our health care system safer, even if we only focus on medications, there are so many other parts of the health care system that deal with medication but are not included in this bill. The first one that comes to mind, and it's one that we've had the chance of questioning Dr. Thiessen about, is the group purchasing organizations. We already know that there were 11 pharmacists who sat down and reviewed the requests for proposals from Medbuy, the group purchasing organization, and not one of them realized that the chemo drug had to be concentration-specific. This is not in the bill.

You look at where else in the health care system we handle drugs. Well, I can tell you that in the north, in small communities that I represent, sometimes the physician also dispenses—no oversight. In a lot of the communities that we represent in the north, we have nursing stations. Here again, they handle drugs—no oversight.

If you say that you recognize the value of oversight, please do more than looking in the rear-view mirror. Look ahead. Look at the rest of the health care system and bring that oversight there.

The second part of the legislation also has something that we would support, and it's the sharing of information. But here, the bill basically says that we will give regulation authority to do information sharing. I want more than that, Mr. Speaker. The intentions of the bill are great. Right now, if a college realizes that there's something wrong going on, and the public should know, the bar has been set so high that most of the time it's impossible. Let me read it. There has to be a serious risk of significant bodily harm to the person before they can share wrongful information that they know on a member of a health profession.

But all that the bill does is, it says a body will be created to make regulations. What will that regulation look like? Nobody knows. When will it come? Nobody knows.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

Before we move to petitions, I would like to offer to all members here, and those who can hear this—to wish you Eid Mubarak and a happy Thanksgiving. Enjoy your week with your family. I know that all of you work real hard, so you'll be in your constituencies working hard, as you always do. I want to thank all the members and wish them a happy Thanksgiving.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Having said that, as I was just listening to you, happy Thanksgiving to you, sir.

I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge fees only up to \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

This petition is signed by a great number of people from the great city of Woodstock in Oxford county, and I'm happy to present it on their behalf.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition, from people from all over Ontario, actually:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being

left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system";

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Massoma to bring it to the Clerk.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

"Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

"Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

"Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

"Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

"Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

"Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

"To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I fully support the petition and I give it to page Peyton.

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I'd first like to wish you a happy and beneficial Thanksgiving break.

My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas Cartwright High School is an important part of the Blackstock and area community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty," now Kathleen Wynne, "promised in the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help to keep communities strong'; and

"Whereas schools in rural areas are community places; and

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"Whereas Cartwright students, families, friends and staff have created an effective learning experience that emphasizes a community atmosphere, individual attention and full participation by students in school activities; and

"Whereas the framework of rural schools is different from urban schools and therefore deserves to be governed by a rural school policy; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government"—now Wynne—"found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in communities such as Blackstock;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty"—now Kathleen Wynne—"and the Minister of Education support the Cartwright High School community and suspend plans to close Cartwright High School under the school board's accommodation review process," which has failed, "until the province develops a rural school policy that respects the value of smaller schools in rural communities of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it, and present it to the table through Aly, one of the pages, on their last day.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the" entire "world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to give it to James and sign it, to be delivered to the table.

CASINOS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by more than 5,000 residents of York region and Toronto.

"Whereas five members of Vaughan council ... voted to have the OLG consider the city of Vaughan as a potential casino host, along the Spadina-York subway extension;

"Whereas four members of council ... voted against having the OLG consider the city of Vaughan as a potential casino host;

"Whereas the proposed casino will have serious negative impacts on (1) future use of the subway (2) Vaughan metropolitan centre development (3) parking (4) economic viability of local businesses (5) lowering property value (6) existing gambling host communities (7) addiction and mental health of Vaughan and GTA residents (8) crime (9) prostitution (10) national and international reputation of the city of Vaughan and much more;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To instruct the OLG to remove the city of Vaughan from the list of potential casino hosts and inform the city of Vaughan that it is not in the best interest of the people of Vaughan and the people of Ontario to have a casino located within the Vaughan metropolitan centre and vicinities."

I will send this to the table through page Bridget.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it deals with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and the need for a coordinated plan by the Ministry of Health. It reads as follows:

"Whereas more than 850,000 Ontarians live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD (more than 70,000 in Central LHIN), and these numbers are climbing quickly; and

"Whereas COPD is one of the most costly chronic diseases in Ontario, currently responsible for 24% of emergency department visits and 24% of hospitalizations in this province; and

"Whereas respiratory rehabilitation is a Health Quality Ontario endorsed, evidence-based intervention that improves quality of life for people with COPD and other lung diseases while saving health care dollars; and

"Whereas due to lack of dedicated funding for lung health programs the respiratory rehabilitation program at Southlake Regional Health Centre—the only such program in Central LHIN—was recently cancelled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and

Long-Term Care to urge Central LHIN—and all LHINs—to develop evidence-based plans to address COPD and other lung diseases that coordinate resources and care across all levels of the health care system; and further

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately work with stakeholders to develop a province-wide action plan for lung health to improve prevention, early diagnosis and patient outcomes, while maximizing the return on health care investment."

Speaker, I am pleased to affix my signature in support of the petition, and I'll give it to page Pratah to deliver to the table.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition coming from all over Ontario.

"Whereas many Ontarians need health care services at home and 6,100 people are currently on wait-lists for care;

"Whereas waiting for over 200 days for home care is unacceptable;

"Whereas eliminating the wait-lists won't require any new funding if the government caps hospital CEO salaries, finds administrative efficiencies in the local health integration networks (LHINs) and community care access centres (CCACs), standardizes procurement policies and streamlines administration costs;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"That a five-day home care guarantee is established and existing wait-lists eliminated so that Ontarians receive the care they need within a reasonable time frame."

I support this petition, will affix my name and ask Efua Mensimah to bring it to the Clerk.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades;

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople;

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the latest policies from the Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

As I am in support of this, I have affixed my signature to give it to page Gabrielle.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective,” as well as cruel, “approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

Apparently, it’s the most popular assertion on the Liberals’ Common Ground website, so yay to all those people fighting DOLA.

I’m going to sign this on behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized in this province and give it to Kyle to be delivered to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program.”

I support this petition, affix my name to it, and give it to page William on his last day.

TAXATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Given that there’s only 59 seconds left on the clock, I have this very short petition:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

To “take the unfair HST off of hydro and home heating bills.”

I support this petition, will affix my name and ask James to bring it to the Clerk.

AIR QUALITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and
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“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I am pleased to affix my signature and give it to page Jasper.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES TECHNIQUES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

Mr. McDonell moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 61, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 / Projet de loi 61, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I had the honour of being the PC critic for consumer services for just under two years, and part of my portfolio included

the Technical Standards and Safety Authority and its oversight of consumer safety in Ontario.

I have stated on many occasions my pride in Ontario's skilled workforce. Some of those talents are involved in managing the TSSA, whose board of directors and advisory councils combine industry knowledge in many areas, such as propane, elevators, amusement devices and upholstery.

It is fair to assume that our province should be at the forefront of adopting all that is new, innovative, efficient and safe. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, and certain rigidity factors that have been built into the TSSA could be to blame. This bill addresses some of them.

The many businesses that are regulated by the TSSA have one thing in common: They want to be safe, innovative and successful.

Many small businesses in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry provide stable and well-paying jobs for skilled local tradesmen, technicians and contractors.

The debate we are having here today is not theoretical. The TSSA and their policies touch the lives and livelihoods of many Ontarians, and it is our job to ensure that we maintain a strict consumer safety environment while allowing our job creators to succeed.

The TSSA carries out tens of thousands of inspections every year. These include routine inspections of current licence holders and initial inspections of new entrants into the market. This is done to ensure that Ontario's consumers enjoy safe products and services, and that workers can look forward to a rewarding day's work in a safe environment.

The key component of a universal safety framework is transparency. Every licence holder must be certain that he is being held to the same standards as everyone else. I have met with stakeholders who often shared the same story with me: When a TSSA inspector comes, they never know what to expect.

We live, work and compete in a global marketplace, and job creators are seeking the safest, most stable and easiest jurisdictions to set up shop. They have the right to know what criteria they are being measured against before beginning design and installation work. This is a minimum requirement, and it only makes sense.

This bill, when passed, will ensure that every prospective TSSA licence holder will be aware of both the publicly available technical standards for equipment and operations and any additional TSSA safety criteria applicable in Ontario. By passing this bill, we will ensure that everyone can focus on hiring skilled Ontarians and producing excellent-quality goods and services.

Without safety at work and at home, the economy suffers. In this chamber, we are all conscious of the importance of consumer confidence and a safe workplace. The TSSA is an essential partner for businesses and consumers alike in ensuring that this objective is attained day after day.

The TSSA carried out 56,000 inspections in 2011 alone, which encompassed more than a majority of their

licence holders. As I outlined earlier, stakeholders often feel they are being inspected just for the inspection's sake or just because they were in the area at the time. This shouldn't happen, especially since inspectors charge in excess of \$150 per hour and include travel time, which in my riding can add up to an additional two hours, or \$300, each way.

We all envision the TSSA as a partner with business to develop a comprehensive, proactive attitude to safety amongst all licence holders. In order to achieve this, however, we need the TSSA to create an incentive for good behaviour and have more room and resources to punish repeat and bad offenders. Thanks to Bill 61, this will finally be possible.

The minister will have the opportunity to issue regulations that create a self-inspection program for TSSA licence holders with good safety records. Rather than the frequent inspections we see today, good players in the industry will be able to report on the state of their equipment and premises in a standard manner, and the TSSA will audit such reports from time to time to ensure the integrity of the process. Because this program is implemented by regulation rather than legislation, the minister and industry can be flexible in its implementation, allowing for a trial period to ascertain the merits of such a collaborative approach.

This bill brings more certainty to stakeholders regarding TSSA inspection fees by capping their annual increase to the inflation rate. The TSSA operates on a cost-recovery basis, but we believe very firmly in this House that the agency must give known good business players extra financial breathing room by recovering a greater portion of the cost from the repeat offenders. This is why this bill also includes a measure that brings TSSA inspection fees in line with the private sector compensation for equivalently skilled technicians. Statistics Canada provides regular data on average pay by province and profession, and it would not be too difficult or complex for the minister to issue regulations equating professions with inspection needs. Wages in the private sector for qualified engineers and technicians who could perform TSSA-required inspections rarely exceed \$50 an hour. We have acknowledged the TSSA's concern regarding a potential sharp drop in income by making the cap double the average hourly salary for qualified technicians. I'm sure we will hear more input on this matter at committee. However, the end result of the consultation must be to strike a balance between the TSSA's need to assure its income and our businesses' ability to pay.

Consumers often do not notice the essential evidence of quality and safety of products and equipment in the form of a technical standard certification mark. These are highly sought-after markings that highlight the product's passing of rigorous testing and quality control. There isn't one world body to act as a clearing house for all standards; therefore, many nations and organizations develop their own, and international organizations compete for markets and recognition. One advantage of this arrangement is that some organizations, such as the Com-

pressed Gas Association, specialize in setting standards and guidelines in one industry, pooling their expertise and resources. Unfortunately, the TSSA will not recognize these standards for use in Ontario. Job creators and consumers suffer as a result.

In my riding, the inventor of a new welding torch was forced to remove the only installation of this equipment, which was saving a local business a significant amount of money due to increased efficiency and speed. The reason for this was merely a certification issue, since certain parts were certified as UL instead of cUL. These marks originate from the same reputable organization, Underwriters Laboratories. However, the TSSA does not have the ability to exercise its judgment and its common sense on the issue.

In Bill 61, we create a rapid, public and accountable process for industry stakeholders, including inventors, to present their case for recognizing any particular standard for use in Ontario. Stakeholders will be able to present their case exhaustively to a panel of qualified TSSA engineers, and they will be able to answer any and all questions the TSSA may have. The TSSA will also have to issue their decision within a reasonable and pre-determined time frame and publicly outline the reasons for reaching the decision in all cases, whether they approve or deny the stakeholders' request.

We believe on this side of the House that this will provide additional assurance to consumers and businesses alike that the TSSA is at the forefront of ensuring consumer safety in Canada. Only total transparency can underpin total confidence, and today's global economy demands nothing less.

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Bill 61 contains as a safeguard against a standards void such as the one that occurred in the grain dryer industry—my colleague from Perth-Wellington will be able to expound on this issue. When the Canadian Standards Association, the CSA, decided to retire a particular standard that most grain dryers were certified to, all operators were forced to undergo the TSSA's so-called field approval process. It is an expensive, time-consuming, one-off and inefficient way to deal with equipment used on a very large scale in Ontario.

In Bill 61, the TSSA is given extra powers to retain, at their discretion, whatever standards that were retired or ceased to exist for any reason. If this had existed before the grain dryer issue, the farming community would have been spared a huge headache while other standards bodies could have continued consultations on the new standard.

Many stakeholders have expressed a concern regarding the expertise and qualifications of the inspectors to carry out the TSSA's mandate. Bill 61 strengthens business confidence in the TSSA by ensuring that everyone who performs inspections in the agency has a minimum of two years' experience on the other side of the table; namely, as a licence holder. We have accommodated eventual concerns the TSSA may have with this requirement by delaying its implementation by two years, the exact experience required as a licence holder.

Ontario can take pride in its commitment to the safety of consumers and workers. The agency that enforces the Technical Standards and Safety Act, the TSSA, is administered by an experienced board of directors and could be a valuable partner to Ontario's business community. We need to change the focus to make sure that that partner can generate the safe, well-paying jobs we need to pay for the social and economic benefits we so strongly believe in, to allow us to compete around the world and return our economy to where it needs to be: as the economic engine of Confederation.

I have examples of the issues that our industries are experiencing today, and I want to relay a few. A small equipment job that was designed to be built by experienced, skilled engineers and tradesmen and only cost a few thousand dollars to design and build is tagged with a TSSA bill of over \$15,000 to gain approval. This results in just a few options. First, the business will either forgo the improvements because it can't afford or justify the cost. Secondly, he hires installers in our area from Quebec, and in our area they are not required or don't bother to register their project with the TSSA, so we forgo the safety process altogether. Either way, we lose. This is no way to run a business or a province.

Again, a major manufacturer in our region that produces equipment and torches that are used all over the world has given up on installing equipment in Ontario. First of all, equipment that has been approved and installed all over the US and in nine other provinces under the Compressed Gas Association standards is not recognized in Ontario. In his last installation, he was looking at a minimum cost of \$50,000 to gain approval, with no guarantees. He pulled his equipment out, not willing to risk his reputation with the manufacturer, and he no longer installs in Ontario.

Speaker, there are many examples of places where companies are forced to accept equipment that's old and second-rate because they can no longer afford to go through the process to bring in the newest innovations.

I look forward to hearing other people speak on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I'd like to introduce and welcome some guests who are in the members' west gallery: Melva and Charlotte Snowling, the daughter and great-granddaughter of former NDP MPP Mel Swart. I'd like the members to welcome them here.

Speaker, I'm pleased to join the debate today on Bill 61, presented by the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. I believe he has put a lot of effort into the construct of the bill, the mechanics of the bill and the content. It's evident through his knowledge and the specifics he has pointed to in terms of the need to provide oversight, the need to ensure public safety, and also ensure that we facilitate growth in our business community and make sure we do everything we can to make it as easy as possible for them to follow the rules, stream-

line their operations and ensure public safety. I have had meetings in my riding and across the province about the nature of some of the issues within the TSSA and some of the constraints that small businesses, in particular, feel they are under when having to conform to the regulations built into the TSSA.

However, we have some trepidation about the intent of this bill. One of the biggest areas is the provision for self-inspection. The TSSA was created through the Harris government to take away the purview of inspection for areas within boiler and pressure vessels, operating elevating devices, amusement devices, ski lifts, fuels and upholstered and stuffed articles—among many others, I'm certain. It takes away that regulatory oversight that would have been built into government operations and puts it out to the industry. So it's industry self-regulation; it's a self-funding body, and we understand that. Nevertheless, we have some concerns about now taking that third-party independent self-regulation and delivering it to owner-operators who would be responsible for their own self-inspection. Regardless of how good you are, I think there is some inherent benefit in having a third party come and point out, potentially, some of the deficiencies and remedies that could happen in your workplace or facility that you might not have caught through self-regulation.

Again, you get into a pattern of continuously following the same process. You do it on a yearly or quarterly basis—whatever the prescription is. I don't know if it's built into the bill. But you could expect that an organization, following the rules of self-regulation and self-inspection, would eventually miss some things. That gives us great concern because we know that industries that self-regulate typically don't have the same impetus to really go above and beyond to ensure that their regulation and inspection is matching what the public needs.

All members would be aware of the Sunrise Propane incident in 2008, where a massive explosion occurred in Downsview. One person was killed, and later a firefighter died—the next day, I believe—as a result of exposure to the scene. That's one example of how there was not a sufficient amount of oversight or inspection, and it later came out that the TSSA even failed in their oversight. Even self-regulating third-party independent people can fail.

What we would like to see is certainly more government involvement in inspection, not only in the processes covered under the TSSA, but also working regulations and employment standards and health and safety. We have a massive lack of oversight when it comes to those basic functions. How, in fact, are we going to be able to ensure public safety through another layer of self-inspection? We certainly can't infuse confidence into the public by relinquishing that responsibility.

We also know that just recently the federal government has abandoned and abdicated their responsibilities when it comes to rail safety in this country. We only have to look as far as Lac-Mégantic, where a massive explosion killed dozens of people and created an environmental

nightmare for that town. It will cost tens of millions of dollars, if not hundreds of millions of dollars, to rebuild. Lives were destroyed because of a regulatory regime that relied on self-inspection.

I just don't think it's the path that we should be going down. I certainly want to identify areas where we can help and support small businesses conform to regulation and assist them in delivering safe and productive workplaces. But I certainly don't think that a *carte blanche* approach to self-regulation is the way to do that. Inevitably, it will fail, and we certainly need to sound the alarm in this chamber that that isn't a path we'd like to go down.

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I'm sharing my time, Mr. Speaker, with my honourable colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh, so I will do that now and cede the floor to him. I thank you very much, Speaker, for the time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I went to the Web page of the TSSA and I looked at their annual general meeting. Before the member for Pickering—Scarborough East, the minister of consumer affairs, got to the podium to speak, the outgoing chair of the TSSA said, "Because we're a safety organization, I want to point out the exits in case anything happens here this afternoon." So just in case, if people on this side could go to the right, and people here could go to the left. I've handled all of the safety concerns for us this afternoon.

I did get a letter from the member from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, and he has identified several issues about the TSSA's procedures that, in his opinion, require urgent attention. So I've tried to keep an open mind on it. I'm reminded of what Malcolm X once said about keeping an open mind, and that is, "Despite my firm convictions, I have always been a man who tries to face facts, and to accept the reality of life as new experience and new knowledge unfolds. I have always kept an open mind, a flexibility that must go hand in hand with every form of the intelligent search for truth."

In doing that and in doing some of my research on this, it seems to me that what may have prompted this private member's bill is a letter, as the member has already made reference to, from the owner of a small business who has been having a running battle with the TSSA. It's a welding company, one perhaps at the forefront of innovation in welding technology in Ontario, and a company with an impeccable safety record. They manufacture and sell products across Canada, but not in Ontario. They can sell across the country the products that they are making, but they can't sell them here in Ontario, and they can't do it because of the regulations imposed by the TSSA. So that is unfortunate.

It seems to me what may have prompted the bill, besides that, is that the technical standards often place, according to the owner of the company in this letter that I've seen, unjustified regulatory demands upon producers and operators of technical equipment. An example given

by this company is a welding torch that the TSSA insists on labelling a "burner," and for the components to be changed accordingly. This is a torch, but it has a component which meets a valid American technical standard that the TSSA refuses to acknowledge. This so-called bureaucratic hurdle being encountered by this one company, I believe, is what has prompted the change to the bill in front us, Bill 61, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act.

Speaker, I accept the need for public safety, and I agree with the Hollywood actor and former Governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has said, "Government's first duty and highest obligation is public safety." And I agree with Marcus Tullius Cicero, who is known by his belief that "The safety of the people shall be the highest law."

Speaker, I say we have to slow down a bit here and consider all of the ramifications and consequences of the bill being put forward by my friend from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry. Unlike Ralph Waldo Emerson, who once said, "In skating over thin ice, our safety is in our speed," I don't think we have to go fast on this at all. I think we have to slow down and take our time with it.

As you know, we have a major problem in my part of the province with the girders on the Herb Gray Parkway. It's a big safety issue. These girders were built by a company that didn't have CSA certification. Some of the welders working on the project were not certified to the level that they were supposed to be, and this has created a major, major problem in the safety of those girders for many, many years to come.

I have safety on my mind these days, and the long-term safety of that massive road project. The expert panel says the girders are deficient. They weren't up to standards, and the question was, "Can they be fixed?" The answer was, "Perhaps." Well, I don't want to go with a "perhaps," and I don't want to go with a "perhaps, if we adopt this bill," our lives will be any safer. I'm not sure of that as yet.

I guess I agree with the American astronaut Alan Shepard when he said, "It's a very sobering feeling to be up in space and realize that one's safety factor was determined by the lowest bidder on a government contract." That should give us all pause for concern on this. I agree that we should look at safety in the future. I would hope that the member would try to mediate a resolution between the companies in his riding and the TSSA.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: First of all, I just want to take a moment to wish everyone a happy Thanksgiving, and Eid Mubarak to all of my Muslim friends all across Ontario. Hopefully we'll all get a chance to gather with our friends and family and give thanks for some of the things that we have and that I strongly feel that at times we often take for granted.

I'm very happy to rise today to speak on Bill 61, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act. First of all, I would like to thank the member from

Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry for his interest in public safety and in the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, commonly known as TSSA.

The TSSA is responsible for administering and enforcing regulations under the Technical Standards and Safety Act to operations in the sectors of fuels, boiler and pressure vessels, elevating and amusement devices, and upholstering and stuffed articles. Many of these industries have direct impact on public safety, and the TSSA's prime concern, of course, is safety.

Bill 61 proposes to amend various sections of the Technical Standards and Safety Act. To my reading of this bill, the goal is to limit the TSSA's authority in some areas, while creating new responsibilities for the minister to intervene in TSSA operations. It also proposes to let some people who fall under the TSSA's authority conduct their own safety inspections.

I want to reiterate that our government is committed to a fair and balanced regulatory approach that ensures public safety and minimizes regulatory burden on Ontario businesses. At the outset, I would like to say that I will not be supporting this bill, because that test has not been met. Many of the proposed amendments in this bill will negatively impact public safety and, to make matters worse, they will result in higher costs to Ontario businesses.

Many of the provisions in the bill could increase the cost of doing business, especially for smaller, rural and northern operators. Our government is always open to new ideas to strengthen public safety and support a dynamic business climate in Ontario, but this bill does not do that.

While there are some good provisions in this bill, they should not be enshrined in legislation. The bill proposed will reduce flexibility, limit innovation and unnecessarily bring in the heavy hand of government to business operational issues. This is usually what the Conservatives are against in principle, so I must say that I'm surprised to hear that the member opposite has introduced such legislation.

As I mentioned previously, many of the amendments proposed will also negatively impact current practices and legislation that prioritizes public safety and reduces costs on business. Our government is committed to a fair and balanced approach that ensures public safety and minimizes the regulatory burden on Ontario businesses wherever possible. Our economic plan to drive jobs and growth supports a dynamic and innovative business climate that will ensure that businesses come to, invest in and help grow Ontario's economy. This bill will not support the plan to create jobs in Ontario.

The TSSA is what is known as a delegated administrative authority, most commonly known as a DAA. This model was, in fact, created and implemented when the Conservative government was in power. The Harris government introduced the DAA model in 1996. It was an integral part of their alternative service delivery agenda of the day. It was created to reduce red tape, to improve efficiency and effectiveness in operations, and to enhance public safety and consumer protection.

At the time, they were applauded for implementing such a groundbreaking idea, and as it turns out, the model is working relatively well and is delivering on most of its goals. So the question I ask myself is, why is the opposition flip-flopping on one of the very few things that they actually got right when they were in government?

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This bill proposes to bring many of the operational functions and decisions they wanted outside the government back into the hands of the bureaucracy—exactly what they say they want to avoid. Again, my question is, why the flip-flop? Why do they want to increase the regulatory burden on business and add cost?

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to talk a little bit about the TSSA. The TSSA operates on a cost-recovery basis and it is paid for by the entire industry. Not one dime of taxpayer money goes into their operations. It has cut red tape and reduced the regulatory burden on business. While there have been concerns and issues raised about the TSSA, they are continuing to work on addressing those issues. They have been making changes and are committed to continuing to work.

The thing that causes me the most concern is the provisions that call for self-inspection by business. There would be no direct oversight except by the minister through regulations, which is not effective in day-to-day management. These types of programs are generally put in place for unique or technically larger industries and businesses. Not only will this directly impact public safety, but it will be hurtful for smaller businesses as they may not have the financial or technical resources to meet the requirements. And the cost may, in fact, be higher under the proposed bill than current TSSA inspections.

I'm now going to go through a few of the specific provisions of this bill. Firstly, it seeks to establish a cap on hourly and flat rates charged for an inspection and to give the minister a role in setting the fees. A cap may sound like a good idea, but the TSSA operates on a cost-recovery basis. If the TSSA could no longer calibrate inspection fees to recover the inspection program costs, they would have to increase licence fees or reduce safety services or both. Also, giving operational control of fees to the minister goes against the DAA principle and puts the whole model at risk.

The bill also seeks to establish mandatory qualifications and years of experience for TSSA inspectors. The apparent intent of this is to require inspectors to have the same qualifications as contractors in the regulated sectors. But the fact is that inspection skills differ from the skills of a contractor. Under this provision, TSSA inspectors would need to obtain additional certifications, and costs will go up for this inspection program. It would also narrow the labour market and increase employment costs for all licensed businesses that require inspections.

These provisions would allow business to enrol in a self-inspection program established and governed by the minister through regulation. The apparent intent of the provision is to allow licensees to avoid TSSA inspections

and to manage their own inspections. If the member thinks that this will reduce inspection costs, then he is mistaken. Self-inspection programs are generally put in place for technically and corporately sophisticated industries and businesses. The thousands of small businesses that are regulated through the TSSA would not have the financial or technical resources to meet even the most minimal requirements of any self-inspection program that may maintain public safety. This idea could, in fact, be more costly than the current TSSA model.

Lastly, I want to talk about the provisions that would require the TSSA to share guidelines or checklists that an inspector uses to conduct initial or periodic inspections with business owners, as well as checklists for other inspections. This, unlike most of the other things in the bill, might be a good idea, but the reality is that a checklist would only be relevant for initial and periodic inspections. They are simply not relevant for other types of inspections.

That being said, this legislation is a heavy-handed way to deal with what is an administrative matter. I'm confident that the continued conversations with the TSSA leadership are a better way to deal with many of the concerns that have been raised in this bill than simply passing legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm very pleased to be able to speak today in favour of Bill 61, the Technical Standards and Safety Amendment Act, 2013. I congratulate my colleague the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengary for his direct action to curb some of the red tape facing Ontario business.

Since I was elected in 2012, I have received a surprising number of complaints about TSSA. We've heard about the TSSA too often making unreasonable, unrealistic, time-consuming and expensive demands on people who simply cannot afford it. Grain farmers know that all too well. Just last year, TSSA threatened grain farmers with dramatically higher costs to certify their grain dryers and burners when the CSA stated it would no longer certify them as they had in the past.

I wrote to the former and current Ministers of Agriculture and Food on this issue, as well as the Minister of Consumer Services. I met with local representatives of the Grain Farmers of Ontario. I asked questions in the House. Grain farmers took their message to the government. While we now have a reprieve from the CSA, the TSSA, under this government's authority, showed no inclination to respond to the issues that had been raised.

Grain farmers should never have had to face that kind of uncertainty. The Downie Street Bake House in Stratford is another example of TSSA red tape run amok. Alan Mailloux and Barbara McMahon run the Downie Street Bake House. Because of TSSA red tape, they had to abandon the high-quality used ovens they had purchased. The ovens were in very good condition. The ovens were safe. Yet the TSSA made unreasonable demands of this small business, even telling them to

bring the ovens' American manufacturers to visit Stratford to inspect these ovens. In the end, Alan and Barbara had to replace their perfectly good ovens with new, lower-grade ovens. That put them in \$20,000 worth of debt. We went to bat for the Bake House, but bureaucratic excuses were the only response we heard to the issues we raised.

The provincial government should be going out of its way to encourage small business and to reduce red tape and unnecessary costs. But the TSSA, at least in this case, did the opposite. What's worse, when we raised these concerns, the government refused to step in, refused to show leadership, refused to correct the problems.

I'm very supportive of my colleague's efforts to apply some common sense to the TSSA regulations. We need to make TSSA standards more flexible. We need to be able to reward responsible businesses while punishing repeat offenders. We need to avoid costly delays in approving equipment that has already been certified in other parts of North America. We need to cap the rate of inspection fees. And, of course, we need to avoid a repeat of the grain dryer experience so that CSA standards continue to apply in Ontario if they are retired without a successor. To be clear, we do need to ensure that our products are safe for the people who use them, but we need to do so in a way that is reasonable, justifiable and understandable. We need to pass Bill 61.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 61. I don't have much time, so I will do my best. I want to thank the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for introducing the bill.

1440

While the intent of the bill is to update the TSSA standards with the aim of making Ontario's economy more competitive—and we all agree on supporting a dynamic business climate in our province—I wish to express my concerns in regard to the amendments to the current act that would allow businesses to participate in self-inspection programs.

Allow me to share my local perspective in this regard. In York South–Weston, the riding that I have the privilege to represent, industrial land use has existed alongside residential neighbourhoods for decades. The proximity of companies handling hazardous fuels, which are under the jurisdiction of the TSSA, has been a source of concern for my residents for decades.

I'll give you a few examples. For example, in 1986, in the old city of York, there was an explosion in an illegal taxicab repair shop that caused extensive damage to the surrounding area. It was a miracle that there were no deaths.

In January 2008, the explosion of a single fuel tank at a scrapyard in my riding caused the injury of a worker, and several nearby homes were damaged. This explosion was one of a series of repeated accidents that happened at that location. On that same site, there were six fires from 1996 to 2008.

Also, the northeast part of my riding was closely affected by the tragic Sunrise Propane explosion in August 2008.

Given the great deal of attention that the handling of volatile fuels brought to my riding, at that time I presented a motion in the House, which was passed unanimously, that meant to bring attention to a variety of issues in regard to volatile fuels, with the intention of increasing the safety of residential neighbourhoods and also of the operations of these places.

Safety is of utmost concern. Unfortunately, this bill doesn't contemplate that, and I won't be able to support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It's my pleasure to rise this morning and join the debate around Bill 61, the Technical Standards and Safety Amendment Act, which looks to restore some balance and common sense to the mandate of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority, which enforces the act.

At the outset, I would like to commend my colleague the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for his attention to detail in this legislation. He has proven himself to be a very thorough and thoughtful debater on matters that come before him in this House, and this is a case in point, Speaker.

Bill 61 is a reasonable approach to a real problem, which is that, under this Liberal government, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority has become overgrown with red tape and bureaucracy. The authority has undergone mission creep, unfortunately becoming an organization that constricts and strangles businesses and stifles innovation.

Nobody disputes that the Technical Standards and Safety Act serves a purpose. It is important to remember, however, that the act must ultimately serve both businesses and consumers, balancing the interests of both while acting as a portal for technical standards and consumer safety.

The authority must be able to reward good businesses, punish repeat offenders and ensure broad awareness of its policies among both businesses and consumers.

Bill 61 would allow the minister to make regulations establishing a self-inspection program, subject to TSSA auditing, with the minister also determining eligibility and obligation under the program.

This would allow those businesses with spotless safety records to experience the benefit of that behaviour, which is to say that they earn the power of self-inspection. This would be a significant measure because the authority bills more than \$150 an hour in inspection fees. That's a premium that many small businesses cannot afford. As we know from inspections in other ministries, such as the province's slapstick Drive Clean inspection, these bills can quickly add up and go on far beyond reason.

In fact, Bill 61 would also halt the upward creep of these inspection fees and hold future increases to the rate of inflation. Among its many sensible measures, Bill 61

would also enhance transparency, increase accountability and improve user-friendliness.

There is a lot of good in this bill—certainly too much to do justice to in just a few minutes today. But I'm happy to support it. I look forward to getting it to committee, and I look forward to the ongoing debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate? The member for Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised that my colleagues in this House don't want to stand and speak to this—

Mr. Ted Arnott: They're all finished.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: They're all finished? Okay. Well, that leaves us with the opportunity to say much about my colleague from Glengarry–Russell–Dundas—I didn't get that in the right order, but I was very close.

Bill 61, the Technical Standards and Safety Amendment Act, is very, very timely. This bill that our member has put together shows that he's very well connected with constituents, not just in his own riding but across the entire province. I can tell you that in the riding of Huron–Bruce, on the other side of the province, the issues he raises and addresses through his bill resonate. Small business owners all over the province raise the same concerns repeatedly. This legislation begins to address the payroll burden and other significant problems left unaddressed in its original state.

Talking specifically about Bill 61, there are so many examples of what's wrong and why this bill is so important. Ontario dealers, people working in the agri-food industry, are facing higher costs to have burners needed in drying operations certified so that their counterparts in the US can move their parts to and from, across the border. In some cases, these burners being certified will cost the grain elevator or an individual farmer upwards of \$3,000.

I've also heard from small business owners who sell propane—they can be campgrounds, they can be convenience stores, they can be co-ops—and they're very clear that TSSA fees and inspections will force small dealers out of business. This is a blow to the countryside and to regions that depend on tourism and propane to generate revenue, and to operate, more importantly. That's why we have to stand up and do the right thing and support Bill 61. This is a very thoughtful bill based on a wealth of experience that my colleague has brought to the table. We need to do the right thing, respect the people and support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: It goes without saying that safety is everyone's concern and the TSSA can work with our businesses. There's no need to be frustrating them. We can see that Bill 61 would help the province better utilize our skilled workforce and be able to better compete with other innovation-driven economies.

Bill 61, the Technical Standards and Safety Amendment Act, is nonpartisan. It addresses the concerns of law-abiding businesses, contractors and tradespeople.

Our member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Jim McDonell, is an engineer. He has introduced this bill following extensive consultations. We know that the body that enforces the technical standards act, the TSSA, is administered, obviously, by an experienced board of directors and is in a position to be a valuable partner with Ontario's business community. The TSSA must work for both businesses and consumers, acting as a one-stop shop regarding standards and safety. It must also be in a position to reward those good businesses, punish the repeat offenders and ensure a broad awareness of its policies—again, amongst both business and the general public.

As MPP McDonell points out, there is equipment that's approved for use everywhere else in North America, but it cannot be used in Ontario because of some of these requirements. Inventors are finding it difficult to market their products in Ontario due to some of the inflexibilities that we've heard about this afternoon.

I'm also told that TSSA charges in excess of \$150 an hour in inspection fees. Again, many small businesses can't afford that. They are also dealing with other non-safety issues where it may or may not be necessary to tie up their time.

The bill has a number of proposals, as we've heard: capping the hourly fees, ensuring that inspectors are qualified, ensuring that those businesses that have an impeccable record aren't faced with the same inconveniences that we should be putting on repeat offenders.

1450

As my time wraps up, Speaker, I just want to reiterate that, for these reasons and other reasons we've heard this afternoon, I certainly support my colleague's private member's bill and encourage all members to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. It was interesting to hear the comments made by the members from Essex, Windsor–Tecumseh, Brampton West, Perth–Wellington, York–South Weston, Burlington and Huron–Bruce, and I appreciate the comments.

First of all, I want to say that this bill rewards people or companies that are following the rules and have a safety record. It also penalizes those that do not. They talked about the issue of Sunrise Propane. That was a case where the TSSA was very much involved but was somewhat restricted in what it could do. This bill would allow them to take stronger action against, as we say, the bad players. I think that some of the problems they thought might be there certainly aren't.

It's a competitive market out there, and there are many new and innovative products produced every day. If our businesses are going to be successful, they need access to them in a timely and inexpensive manner.

Ontario is a large market, and we have much to be proud of, but it's small when compared to the rest of the world. International manufacturers secure approvals of their new products based on the predictability and ease of the approval process and if the cost of it can be recouped from anticipated sales.

In Ontario's case, many won't bother with the aggravation, and their businesses lose out on these important innovations. For a smaller business to take on a product approval is a very tedious process—many times, beyond their capabilities. One major food processor in my riding announced the installation of two lines. After going through the process of the first one, it cancelled it and moved out of the province.

It's interesting: I had a discussion with a high-ranking member of the TSSA who called me to discuss the bill. He concurred with my findings on the negative impact to manufacturing and the need for change, and commented that the current culture within the TSSA makes change very difficult. Clearly, the TSSA sees the need for change itself.

Thank you for the discussion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll deal with the vote at the end of private members' public business.

TRANSPARENCY IN MEMBERS' EXPENSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE EN MATIÈRE DES DÉPENSES DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Fraser moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 108, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act/ Projet de loi 108, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. John Fraser: Before I start, I'd like to say happy Thanksgiving to everyone here and to all of my constituents back home in Ottawa South, and Eid Mubarak as well—many Muslim constituents in Ottawa South.

I'm pleased to stand to speak today to the second reading of Bill 108, the Transparency in Members' Expenses Act. I feel very fortunate to be debating my first private member's bill in my fourth week in the Legislature, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity to do so. Over the last couple of weeks, I've had the opportunity to speak with many of you. I'd like to thank you for your interest, your questions and your candour.

The intent of this bill is to increase transparency in government, which we can all agree is a good thing. I'm not going to speak to the things that have occurred here, in Ottawa and elsewhere that have raised the public's concern and eroded trust. We know what they are. But before I do that, I want to underscore one principle that we should all keep in mind, and I know we already all keep it in mind; that is, as legislators, we need to lead by example. That means we need to live by the standards that we set for others.

The Transparency in Members' Expenses Act proposes the quarterly online posting of every payment to a

member for expenses covered by sections 64 and 67 of the Legislative Assembly Act.

These expenses would include allowances and costs related to transportation and travel, accommodation costs and any other costs incurred while the member is on the business of the assembly or in the performance of his or her duties.

The Board of Internal Economy would be responsible for posting these reports online through the Legislative Assembly website. The posted expenses would include an amount and an explanation. Posting would begin in the first quarter after the bill has received royal assent.

Expense disclosure is not something new. It's already happening in many jurisdictions. Seven provinces and the federal government all disclose members' expenses. In researching the bill, I discovered some of the following. The province of British Columbia posts members' capital city living expenses and travel expenses on a quarterly basis. The province of Alberta also posts members' expenses quarterly. In Newfoundland and Labrador, summaries of expenses paid to members are posted to the website maintained by the Office of the Speaker. In Nova Scotia, the Clerk of the management committee receives a monthly report of all expenses paid to individual members, and expenses are posted monthly. Manitoba has been posting members' expenses since 2010.

Major cities in Ontario, like Toronto and Ottawa, post mayors' and city councils' expenses online. In fact, the city of Ottawa also publishes theirs monthly.

Overseas, starting in 2010, the United Kingdom publishes the online detailed expenses of members bimonthly.

Even south of the border, they publish all reimbursed expenses for the House of Representatives on the Statement of Disbursements website.

Coming back to Canada, newly appointed Senator Doug Black, from Alberta, posts all his expenses, divided by category and broken down by specific item, every three months on his website. A former member of this Legislature, Senator Bob Runciman, has committed to doing exactly the same thing and is encouraging his colleagues to follow suit.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that online disclosure of elected representatives' expenses is not something new. The fact of the matter is, we are behind almost everyone else.

Coming back a little closer to home, there are members of this Legislature who post their year-end expenses on their websites, like the members from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and Nipissing. I post my expenses for travel, accommodation and hospitality monthly. I do this because it is a commitment I made to my constituents and one I will continue to do. I know from knocking on doors that it is important to people.

On our Common Ground initiative, our party's conversation with Ontarians, disclosure of members' expenses ranks fourth. Here are some of the comments you'll find there: "MPPs should be required to publicly list all of their expense claims." "If I was an MPP I

would want to post everything voluntarily and completely.” “I would have nothing to hide ... and being open about how I’m spending taxpayers’ funds would, I think, be appealing to those who might consider voting for me.” Then there’s this one: “Something that applies to all MPPs, not just cabinet ministers.” Now, I can’t be sure but I suspect that may have come from somewhere down here in the front two rows.

What this tells us is that this is something that’s important to the people who elect us. Here in Ontario, the Premier, members of cabinet and parliamentary assistants post their travel, accommodation and hospitality expenses online. We require ministry staff, senior public servants, executives and boards of agencies to post their expenses online. We also require this of senior executives and boards of our province’s hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, as we go forward, we’re going to require online disclosure for more people in organizations that we fund and support. It begs the question, how can we hold people to standards that we haven’t set for ourselves yet? What is central to today’s debate is exactly that.

1500

When the bill was drafted, I wanted to ensure that it was straightforward, reasonable and concise. I did this because I think the most important thing we can debate today is not the technical aspects of the bill; the most important thing we can debate today is: What standard, as a public body and as representatives of the people who elect us, do we want to hold ourselves to? I believe that posting our expenses online is the right thing to do.

I think that this is an important debate, I think it’s a discussion that we all need to have, and I would urge all members of this House to support Bill 108. I look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much to the member for bringing this bill. I am very much in favour of seeing this Legislature post certain expenses online. I agree, also, with your statement where you had said that we’re not here to discuss the technical aspects of your bill today; I agree with that, as well. Hopefully we’ll have a wonderful opportunity to debate the merits of the technical aspects when it’s in committee, and I look forward to that—for the opportunity to get this into committee so we can go through it.

I want to say that I believe that we should be open and transparent with our expenses. To that end, my expenses are posted online; they were when I was first elected here, in my first year; they have been in my second year. I like to post the expenses that are listed from the Legislative Assembly—the mailing that we get that shows us our annual expenses: salary, staffing, Toronto accommodations and all of those numbers. I like to post those numbers. I think it’s very important that we do that. It is public information. It’s available today. It takes a lot to get it, and I like the idea of each member posting those.

Again, discussing the technical merits of just how drilled down we want to get, we’ll look forward to doing at committee. I can also tell you that, in my seven years

as mayor of the city of North Bay, I did post my expenses online. Far greater—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I’m going to say something here, Speaker. I find something very offensive in what the member just said. I’m going to read something that his own Premier said on September 18. This is a quote from Premier Wynne. “I just want to say I really don’t believe that personal attack is necessary.” She also said, “I don’t believe that calling names and undermining people’s credibility or attempting to do that is necessary,” so I take exception to what that member had to say. I won’t point out which member it is; he knows who he is.

Speaker, I posted my expenses online, and I must tell you that I was the only mayor in Canada who had such a drilled-down level, but I will tell the member that it was a lot of work, and I don’t know that it’s practical here. You could go on my expenses as mayor and click on any day of the week and see who I had lunch with, see how much lunch cost if it was paid for by the taxpayer, and see how much the tip was. I have to tell you, it was a pile of work. I would never want to see us get to that level. The pendulum was way over here to say, “Do you know what? I really believe that you should be able to show that,” but the pendulum should be somewhere in the middle, with a level of expenses posted that makes sense, so the public can look at and understand what you’re spending taxpayers’ dollars on without having to drill down into a deep level.

Again, I say, congratulations to the member for bringing this bill forward. I think it’s timely. I think it’s important. I think it’s significant that we do that, and I look forward to a civil discussion without the snide comments from the member across the way in the future.

I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 108.

Let me start by recognizing the member from Ottawa South for bringing a thoughtful piece of legislation in front of this House.

I have known the member from Ottawa South for a long time. I’ve had great opportunities to work with him in Ottawa on many issues that are important to my community of Ottawa Centre and to our city of Ottawa. One thing I’ve always found quite striking about the member from Ottawa South is his diligence and his integrity. He always has a desire to make sure that we are serving our constituents well. I think it’s quite telling, Speaker, that the very first bill that he has brought forward since his election as the member of provincial Parliament for Ottawa South is around a key issue around integrity, around transparency of the manner in which we, all members of this House, treat taxpayers’ dollars. So I commend the member for Ottawa South for his hard work, and for bringing a piece of legislation that shines the light on how we, who are stewards of public funds, in

our personal capacity, in the execution of our duties to our constituents, deal with those dollars.

I am confident that every one of us use those dollars wisely for the sole purpose of serving our constituents, but I think we need to go a step further, as outlined in Bill 108; that is, we let our constituents know how those dollars are being spent. It's not too much of a stretch as to what's already happening. I think the member from Nipissing rightly mentioned that that information is already available. Perhaps version 1.0 of that information is already available, because it's produced at the end of the year in hard copy. We find them on our desks every year. All of us can go line by line and see how we have spent the global budget that is allocated to us to fulfill our duties as elected representatives.

It is not a difficult task, Speaker, to (1) make that information readily available, easily accessible to all Ontarians, especially to our respective constituents; but also (2), to provide that information in a format that is easy to access as well. Perhaps the best way to do that is putting it on the Internet. As the member from Ottawa South mentioned, that information already exists as it relates to ministers and parliamentary assistants. All that information is provided for line by line, quite detailed as to how the dollars have been spent. I think we should take that extra step, as has been proposed here in Bill 108, to do so as it relates to our constituency budgets as well. I think it does us a favour in ensuring transparency to our constituents so they are aware as to how we are serving them and the kinds of activities that we get engaged in, and ensuring that there is, obviously, absolute transparency.

Once again, congratulations to the member from Ottawa South for bringing this very important bill—and as a testimony of his character, as an individual. I want to again congratulate him on being elected as a representative and look forward to continuing working with him as we serve our great city of Ottawa.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise this afternoon and contribute to the discussion on Bill 108, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act. This is, as the member has already pointed out, not an overly complicated bill in theory, but it does warrant some serious discussion, and I'd like to take some time to explain why. I am going to drill down a bit, because there's specific reference to the Board of Internal Economy. I happen to be the Progressive Conservative member of the BOIE. There's one member from the NDP, one member from the Liberal backbench and one minister of the crown.

What this bill sets out to do is relatively simple. If enacted, Bill 108 would require the Board of Internal Economy, or BOIE, as we call it, to table quarterly reports in the Legislature on members' expenses and also ensure that those reports are posted online—as I said, a relatively straightforward goal.

1510

First off, Speaker, let me say that I support the intentions of the member from Ottawa South and the goals of Bill 108. Transparency is something that should be

strived for, and that is why I will be supporting Bill 108 this afternoon. One of the benefits that Bill 108 has is that it gives us a chance to have a conversation about processes and procedures that too often continue along without any revision or updating. Any time we can take a moment to look at how we're doing something, or how the government is doing something, assess it and ask, "Is there a way we can make it better? Is there a way we can make it more efficient? Is technology allowing us to do things differently?"—well, I think that with Bill 108, we have that opportunity.

Regarding Bill 108 specifically, I think we should focus on the second question I just posed, the one that deals with efficiency. In other words, if we can agree that more transparency is good, then can we also agree that Bill 108 proposes the best way to do it? This is where I think Bill 108 could benefit from some further study and amendment at the committee level. My reasoning is rooted in the Board of Internal Economy's makeup and its purpose.

As I said previously, the board is a body composed of four MPPs—representatives from each party and one from the cabinet—that is charged with overseeing the policies and guidelines of the Legislative Assembly. Notice I did not say "enforcement." So while I can understand why the member would think the onus should be on the BOIE to publish these reports, I do wonder if perhaps there is a better opportunity.

You see, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly already submits a report of all members' expenses annually to the assembly in June. In a nutshell, what happens is the financial services division prepares all the expenses in a report, then that report is delivered to the Speaker, and the Speaker tables it here in the assembly. So while technically, yes, the financial services division does fall under the purview of the BOIE, the BOIE itself does not publish those reports. These are the types of questions I think need to be asked when we consider Bill 108, and committee is the perfect place to get into those details.

For example, why would we compel the BOIE to table and publish quarterly reports when the Speaker will also then be tabling annual reports with the same information? That's why, while I commend the member for taking the initiative with Bill 108, I do think the bill needs some adjusting in terms of ensuring we are not creating needless duplication.

In conclusion, processes are already in place that are designed to accomplish the goal the member is striving for. It happens, as you made reference, to ministers, parliamentary assistants and opposition leaders. I would like to suggest that that model could be expanded to all members of the Legislature, so rather than create entirely new ones that overlap those already established, I think we should take a second look at the existing framework to see if that's working and whether we can update that. This way, we could determine how to make any necessary changes that would ensure the processes are still achieving the desired result.

As I say, a little more detail, because I am a member of the BOIE—but certainly I support the intention behind

Bill 108 and congratulate the member from Ottawa South for bringing it forward for discussion this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise to speak of this bill, and I want to preface my remarks with my own experience of now some 25 years in public life. In 25 years of public life, I have had to file a great many claims over the years for expenses I have incurred, either as a councillor, as a mayor or as an MPP.

I come from the point of view that you should never claim anything that you would use in your ordinary life. Therefore, when I go out to an event and I have dinner, I pay for the dinner. I don't ask the taxpayers of Ontario to pay for the dinner because, in my own view, I ought not to be claiming it. The same thing for taxis: I very seldom—and you can check the records going back all the years—have ever taken a taxicab. If I find that I need to go somewhere and cannot drive there myself, I take public transit, if I'm in Toronto, and do not claim for those tickets—by and large, generally. In terms of mileage, I do not claim for mileage because I don't think it's right for a person who earns the kind of salary we do as MPPs to claim mileage to and from home, although I know it's permissible to claim that. I think that most people who go to work—whether you work in a factory or a restaurant or a store, and you have to get yourself there by car—pay for their own mileage. I don't see why we should either.

As an MPP, I take the responsibility of filing my claim each and every month. It's generally a fairly small claim because I live in Toronto and I do not have an apartment. Those people who are from outside are entitled to an apartment if they're more than 40 miles away. I understand that, but I don't have that. My claim at the end of the year, when you look at it, is a relatively small claim vis-à-vis everyone else, or almost everyone else, in this room, partially because I do it and I don't claim and partially because I live in Toronto and I don't have a lot of expenses like people who have to take buses or trains or flights in to this place and go home each weekend and come back the following week. The expenses can be really extraordinary.

I'm always mindful of how things are published and how people are expected to account for it, because I know that it's not always fair how it is interpreted. I never forgot—and I was a relatively new MPP at the time; I think I was only here for about a year—when the expenditures came down after the end of the year, as they do. The press was all over then-member Howard Hampton, who was the leader of the New Democratic Party, because he had spent more than any other MPP in the entire place in terms of his travel expenses and other expenses. You know, nobody stopped to ask, why did he spend the most? It was patently obvious to everybody in the room, but not necessarily to the press and the public, who hounded him for days. It's because he lived in Kenora-Rainy River. He had to fly from Kenora-Rainy River, back and forth, not only every week but sometimes twice a week, to attend community functions, to

attend things because he was the leader of the party. He had to file for meals because he was never at home. And, my God, what happened with that.

This is what I'm worried about in this particular bill: not that the member's heart isn't in the right place, but it's how the information is going to be used and collected, and for what purpose.

We already submit all of those documents; I do it every month. Every year, without fail, the government of Ontario tables how much each and every one of us has spent and in which line items. It is possible for people to retrieve on those line items what the monies were spent on. What the member is asking for is that this be done quarterly, but he's also asking that it come with explanation and things that are going to be onerous.

I asked the hard-working person—I have one staff person. I know if you're on the government side and you're a parliamentary assistant or you've got some other perk, you might have more than one staff member—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Okay, Mr. Del Duca is showing me two. But I have one, and I asked her, "How much extra work is this going to provide to you?" It was onerous. When you have one person working for you and then you have to add all of these things together, it is onerous.

If the BOIE or the member's bill would say we'd all get an extra staff person to do this, or an extra few hours and pay for them to do this, I might say, "Maybe." But what is happening is that the onus is being put on members of Parliament, who I believe are all—every single one from every single party—honourable people who will not abuse the system.

As a matter of fact—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Cabinet is left out.

Mr. Michael Prue: I'm going to get to that in a minute, that cabinet is left out.

As a matter of fact, I think that every single person in this place is honourable and will not abuse and has not abused the system. It is very difficult being in public life. It has been very difficult for me over the 25 years. That's why I'm so very careful in what I actually attempt to gain back from expenses. I do not want to see my expense claim on the front page of the Globe and Mail, the Star or the Toronto Sun, because if it is, obviously somebody has a problem with it. Over those 25 years, I've never had a single person do it, and there's a reason for that. There's a reason that all MPPs should learn from that as well.

You know, this bill is a little bit, to my mind, that of a new guy, a bright guy, a new MPP, coming forward and trying to make a little bit of a mark for himself by saying, "I am coming here to shake up this grand old institution of the Legislature of Ontario. I'm going to shine some light on how the expenses and expenditures are made by 107 honourable people," who, I want to say, are very closely monitored and watched by the staff of the Legislative Assembly.

1520

When I put in an expense claim—I think I've had two of them sent back to me in all the years where an item

was disallowed. You can fight that. You can explain what it is. Or you can, as I did, just simply say, "It's disallowed," accept it, swallow it and that's the end, because those are experts, and they tell us those things that can be expensed and those things that cannot.

I wonder, though—I wonder why cabinet ministers and others are not being included in this. These are people with huge staffs.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: They're already covered.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, they're covered in a different way. They're covered in a different way, but not by this bill.

Maybe, as my friend said, if it's good enough that they do in another bill, then we should be in that bill. If they're not being covered adequately in the bill that covers them, then perhaps they should be included in this one.

But I don't see a division between one set of MPPs and another, depending on whether you're a cabinet minister, a parliamentary assistant or anything else. We are all, 107 of us, honourable people.

But I question why the government, or why this particular member, is bringing forward a bill like this, because heaven knows there have been expenses and claims brought to this Legislature that are horrendous, and this government seems singularly unwilling or unable to control them.

I'd just like to go through some of them for the last couple of years. These are some of the egregious ones, and I wonder why nothing is being done about this, why there's no bill about this. Perhaps he can explain in his two-minute rebuttal why there's no bill.

Ontario expense scandals:

The Pan Am Games executive Ian Troop earned \$477,000 last year. He had:

- \$8,561 for a Mexican hotel and cocktail party;
- \$837 on dinner for six TO2015 team members;
- 91 cents for parking.

Or perhaps how about Allen Vansen, senior VP of operations:

—\$27,000 to move from Vancouver to Toronto, including \$110 to transfer his pet.

Or how about Kathy Henderson:

—\$704.10 for hotel charges in Acapulco without a receipt.

Or how about Louise Lutgens:

- \$1,830 for a six-day car rental in Guadalajara;
- \$400 for a Telus BlackBerry cancellation fee;
- \$9.92 for laundry; and
- \$45 for a BlackBerry case.

Let's not forget Chris Mazza. We're still working on that one, and nothing appears—other than his being fired—of ever having been done about it:

- \$9,600 for four nights at the Paris Four Seasons Hotel;
- \$5,940 for five nights at the Copacabana Palace in Brazil;
- \$2,680 for a stay at the Fairmont Chateau hotel in Whistler;

- \$1,154 for limousines and alcoholic beverages;
- \$800 for avalanche ski training;
- \$725 for a night at the Park Plaza hotel;
- \$250 for a massage;
- \$58 for a lobster burger;
- \$77 for dinner with his girlfriend;
- \$15 for a shot of absinthe.

Interjection: Absinthe?

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes.

- \$1.50 for Tic Tacs; and
- 75 cents for parking.

How about the OLG, Mr. Speaker? How about that?

The OLG executive spending:

- \$551,000 for a four-day annual gaming conference for 250 senior employees, not including travel;
- \$100,000 a year on sporting events to entertain retailers;

—\$41,519 to \$57,512 each for luxury cars for 26 OLG executives;

—\$3,600 for 22 cancelled hotel rooms during a Toronto sales meeting;

—\$7 for a pen refill; and

—\$1.12 for a cloth grocery bag.

How about the Niagara Parks Commission, which also reports to this government? From 2006 to 2009, Joel Noden charged \$395,000 in expenses, including:

—\$10,000 for a hotel stay in England—must have been one great hotel;

—\$1,800 at a nightclub; and

—\$200 for a liquor store tab.

How about health services? Sixteen hospitals—you know, this is also reporting to the government and nobody's watching it. One individual, a consultant with an annual salary of \$275,000, billed \$350 for a three-person dinner, including a \$215 bar tab, and \$500 for phone calls during a three-day stay at a \$400-per-night Chicago hotel. We got eHealth. I think I'm running out of time, but you all know about eHealth too.

So here it is: A member is trying to get 107 honourable people who, I swear, haven't made a false claim and who already obey the law and have their things reported once a year—he tries to make it four times a year. This government has systematically and totally ignored illegal, immoral expenses for all the government agencies that they staff with their friends. Something is very wrong here, and this bill is not going to fix it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I rise today with great pleasure to support the first private member's bill put forward by the member from Ottawa South. I want to commend him for his commitment to accountability and transparency.

I believe that all of us in elected office actually have a responsibility as stewards of public funds, and this bill proposes that we give our constituents online access to our expenses, thereby increasing the transparency of this Legislature and, ultimately, our own accountability. I believe putting this information online is the right thing to do, and I think that's where we're going ultimately.

This bill proposes that we lead by example and live by the rules of accountability that we create for others. Our government, in April 2010, began posting our expenses online, ministry by ministry, as part of our commitment to improving transparency and accountability in the use of public funds. So online posting of expenses is already happening in government, and it's happening in my ministry. Right now, anyone who is interested can log on to our expense claim website, browse by ministry and pull up a list of expenses that I and my staff have posted.

The public disclosure of expenses website provides information on the travel, meal and hospitality expense claims of cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, political staff, government appointees and senior management in the ministries. This information is also available in the form of an annual report on the use of public funds to the public accounts of Ontario.

I am more than happy to provide this information as a minister, so I don't see why I shouldn't do it as an MPP. What that means to our government is that it has opened up our books to the public and that our constituents have the ability to access more information than ever on how their money is being spent.

When I was a city councillor years ago in Brampton, it was not a common practice to provide this level of transparency and accountability to the public on how we spent their tax dollars. When we began posting ministerial expenses online, I thought this was an obvious step in the right direction. It's something that I encourage all jurisdictions, from our cities to our towns to this Legislature to the federal government, to continue doing.

We need to avoid the kinds of situations like the one I recently read about on the CBC news website. The article profiled a former Clerk from Canada's Senate and his experience with the senators' sense of entitlement, and the experience of the Nova Scotia Auditor General when he took a close look at the expenses of the MLAs of that province.

This bill being proposed by the MPP for Ottawa South is a practical tool in the toolbox of our government's effort to expand transparency. I am supportive of this bill, and I believe the member from Dufferin—Caledon offered some constructive advice on how to make it stronger when it arrives in committee, because I believe that all of the members in the House can provide good advice. At the end of the day, the 107 members in this Legislature are accountable to our electorate and to the people of Ontario.

At the end of the day, I support this Bill 104, and I believe that it is an initiative that will amend the Legislative Assembly Act in a positive way and provide accountability and transparency to all of our electorate. I think that's why we came to this House, to provide accountability and transparency on how public dollars are spent. I'm happy to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I wish I had an hour, but it turns out I don't. On the member's bill, I congratulate him. I

think it's certainly thoughtful, and a bit contentious as well, I suppose, by some measure. I think we're watching the wrong thing, actually, when it comes down to it, as was just described by the minister who spoke.

Also, I was very impressed with the member from Beaches—East York. The member there mentioned a litany of scandalous expenses. I don't think or intend to impugn that same charge against any member in the House here; that's for sure. However, the government has some worrying to do with respect to the Pan Am Games, which our member from Barrie has been talking about, and the scandalous spending at Ornge by Chris Mazza and others.

1530

I say in great deference and respect—here's the issue—that members themselves have many oversights imposed on them today, some of which I think are intrusive. I don't mean to be blaming any individuals, but having just done my disclosure statement with Lynn Morrison, for whom I have great respect, I think it's very intrusive. I'm not in cabinet. If I happen to have a few bank shares or other kinds of assets, what business is it of—I'm not going to be owning anything. I think that if you're in cabinet, if you're a member of the executive council, that's quite acceptable, because they're the people who actually make all the decisions. We are here basically representing our constituents.

I know the author of the bill was, I guess, really the executive assistant to the Premier, in terms of his constituency office. So he's fully aware of members' oversight.

Each year, we do our disclosure, but the Legislative Assembly, under the HR command—Nancy Marling is the executive officer there—has a list of everything we submit for expenses or to be reimbursed, and that's disclosed in our annual document each year; I believe it is in June. That's printed; it is available in public.

I'm going to go to some of my notes here: "Financial Services provides support to members of the Legislative Assembly ... offices, commissions and the parties." Most of this reporting mechanism is really organized under the rules of the Board of Internal Economy. On that board are represented the Liberals, the NDP and the Conservatives as members. It's chaired by the Speaker, I believe. That annual report could easily be put online, and I am in support of that.

I think this bill is a deflection from the abuses and scandals that are ongoing now. If it was that important to the minister who spoke, and to others, I myself would suspect that it should be a government bill. If they really want to put some teeth in it, make it a government bill.

With that, I'd like my colleague from Newmarket speak for a few minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I just want to say that I agree with this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I just want to congratulate my colleague from Ottawa South for bringing this forward so that we can have an enhanced discussion on this issue. I want to congratulate him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: As it always is when I have the opportunity to rise in my place in this House and speak to various pieces of legislation or whatever might be coming before us for consideration, it is a pleasure for me to stand, in particular today, here this afternoon and begin by congratulating my colleague, one of our newest caucus members on this side and also my seatmate, as everyone can see and folks at home can see, the new member from Ottawa South—for bringing forward, I think, a very appropriate and very timely proposed piece of legislation that will help to shed some additional light and provide some additional transparency for residents in his community of Ottawa South, my community of Vaughan and, should it pass, as I believe it should, for people living right across Ontario.

I want to begin my remarks today by saying, as others in this House have said before me, to the new member from Ottawa South, congratulations on bringing forward a very important piece of proposed legislation, something that's long overdue here in this particular place. I want to congratulate him for having the courage to do so.

With respect to the bill itself, I've had the opportunity to be in the House this afternoon to listen to what members of both other parties and members of my own party have said regarding the bill. I am heartened and I'm encouraged for the first time in a long time to hear members of the official opposition making constructive comments about this particular legislation; to hear them support the notion, support the principle, provide some commentary and ask questions regarding certain technical aspects and what kind of workload might be required, how it should look, what format. That makes sense to me. But understanding very clearly from their comments so far this afternoon that they believe—those who have spoken and others—this is a bill that deserves support, this is a bill that should get to committee after today, is something that's very heartening.

Speaker, I will at least say, here in my place, that it's consistent with some of the other messaging that we've heard over the last number of months from that caucus, and I congratulate them. I so rarely have opportunity to congratulate members of the official opposition, given their past behaviour, Speaker, but today I want to commend them for having the understanding and for taking on the responsibility to stand alongside our member from Ottawa South on this important initiative.

Having said that, I listened with close interest to the member from Beaches–East York, who I believe also serves as the NDP's critic for the Ministry of Finance. I have to express, though I normally have a great deal of respect for that member, some extreme disappointment in some of the remarks that I heard today. That's mostly because he used his time today to dissemble and distract

and deflect away from what is at the heart of this particular piece of legislation. This is simply designed to provide the people who reside in his community of Beaches–East York and in my community of Vaughan and the community of Ottawa Centre and in Ottawa South, and in the rest—Glenarry–Prescott–Russell, Don Valley East, Richmond Hill, Ottawa–Orléans, Niagara Falls and the rest of our communities across the of province of Ontario—with the degree of transparency and accountability about how we spend their money. That is one of the fundamental requests and expectations that the people of our communities, the people of Ontario, have for all of us.

I've said in other debates on other bills in this House that for the last 10 years there has been a fantastic evolution of this government, providing considerable improvements around fiscal transparency and accountability. This private member's bill, through this particular piece of legislation, Bill 108, is yet another step in that evolutionary process.

I am shocked to hear a member of the NDP caucus—in the 12 months that I've been here, I, along with everyone else on this side of the House, have had to listen to those members, be it at committee or be it here in this House, stand up time after time and preach, as only they can preach, about the requirements for accountability and transparency. And here today, those members, that member from Beaches–East York, his leadership and his colleagues, have the chance, for the first time in a long time, to not only talk the talk but walk the walk, and they have failed to do so in the remarks that we heard. I'm hoping that when this comes forward for a vote shortly, they will reconsider, they will stand up and they will support the member from Ottawa South with this very important bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa South, you have two minutes.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd just like to say thank you to all the members of the Legislature, everybody who spoke to it. I'd like to thank the member from Nipissing and the member from Dufferin–Caledon. I appreciate her remarks. I think anything that we can do to make the bill stronger is a good thing. I appreciate the remarks from the member from Durham. I do think, though, that we do have to set some standards for ourselves that we all agree on. I believe that's an important concept. I'd like to thank the member from Nepean–Carleton and the member from Newmarket–Aurora for their support.

I'd like to address the remarks from the member from Beaches–East York. I appreciate that he spoke to the bill. I want to say to him that there are jurisdictions across this country, like British Columbia, Manitoba and Alberta, who have members that come from great distances. I recognize that there are people on both sides of the House that have to travel and that incur a greater expense than the people who live in Toronto or me, who lives in Ottawa. Not for one moment is this bill about the people here. It's about how we all disclose ourselves and become transparent to the people who elect us. I want to

make that very clear. The bill includes all MPPs. That's what it includes. If the members opposite have suggestions about how to strengthen the bill, we can do at committee. What I'm asking you to do is to agree to the principle that we need to keep the standard ourselves that we set for other people.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

1540

FAIR HIRING TO SUPPORT TEACHERS,
PARENTS AND STUDENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PRATIQUES
D'ENGAGEMENT ÉQUITABLES
À L'APPUI DES ENSEIGNANTS,
DES PARENTS ET DES ÉLÈVES

Ms. MacLeod moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 107, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to hiring practices for teachers / Projet de loi 107, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui concerne les pratiques d'engagement des enseignants.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus to bring fairness into our classrooms in Ontario. I would like to first start by acknowledging my time as education critic for the Ontario PCs. Over that period of time, I was able to learn a lot about our education system, and I want to thank all of those stakeholders who made me feel right at home throughout that entire process.

I would like to acknowledge the two cabinet ministers that I dealt with: Ms. Laurel Broten, who has left this place, as well as Minister Sandals, and my dear friend from the NDP, Peter Tabuns. It was wonderful to work with him, and I think I really gained a great appreciation not only for the education sector, but for how important the second-largest spending priority of government is in this assembly. It was remarkable.

Throughout that time, we dealt with two big, major pieces of legislation here, Bill 13 and Bill 14, which was anti-bullying legislation, and, secondly, Bill 115, which legislated agreements for collective bargaining in our education system to prevent strikes from our school system and provide a limited, yet important, wage freeze.

That is what brings me to this piece of legislation, which has been called for, effectively, by teachers, school boards, principals' associations and parents across Ontario. It is to repeal regulation 274. You'll recall, Speaker, that, although we supported Bill 115 and allowed the Liberals to pass those legislated agreements, we did oppose seniority-based hiring. At that time, the government removed it from the original piece of legislation, yet then snuck it in through a regulation.

That has created a problem for our school boards in terms of hiring for long-term occasional teachers. Many parents would contact me, and they would go on to contact me frequently, beginning last year, and as recently as this week, asking that it be overturned, so I thought that what I would do is put forward the Fair Hiring to Support Teachers, Parents and Students Act, 2013.

I'd like to acknowledge the hard work of Howard Goodman, who is a Toronto District School Board trustee, as well as Ramna Safeer and Jesse Waugh, two Toronto District School Board student trustees who are joining us here today in order for them to present their views on this very important issue.

Speaker, as you know, I've spoken many times about my little girl, Victoria, who's not so little anymore; she's growing up. She's eight years old. She thinks she's smarter than me, and likes to tell me what I do wrong—and sometimes what I do right. I obviously have a very vested interest in education as a parent. We all look at it, when our kids are in school, and how we think things should go.

I know that most parents across Ontario expect three things for their children when they go to school. They expect a safe environment. They want to make sure that when their kids go to school, they are going to be safe from harm; whether that's safe from a bully, safe from a predator or safe from an intruder on the school property, we want to make sure that they are safe.

We also want to make sure, secondly, that our students, our children, are learning, so that they are meeting those standards, that they are meeting our objectives for them, so that they are able to read and write and do math, that they are performing in the arts, that they are enjoying physical education and that they understand science. That is incredibly important to us, that there is a curriculum in Ontario that makes them strive to be the best that they can be, because we are going to be competing, particularly in the 21st century, against other nations who have a burning desire to ensure that their students are the best. We have to do that in this province as well.

Finally, every parent I know, including myself and my husband, wants to ensure that our children have the best teachers teaching in the front of that classroom. That means we want the teacher who wants to perform extracurricular activities. That means we want the teacher who is going to spend that extra time with a student in need. That means we want the teacher who is willing to go that extra mile in that school community, who may understand that school community a little bit better than anyone else. Unfortunately, with regulation 274, as well intended it may be for the Catholic education system to prevent nepotism, this actually prevents good teachers from being in front of the classroom because it chooses to have the most active, longest-serving union member in front of the classroom; not the best teacher, who should be there based on merit. I think that's wrong, and I'll be unapologetic in defending those teachers who should be in the front of the classroom, like Jason Trinh.

I heard from behind me a little giggle, and it was from my very good friend Rob Leone, who is now the Progress-

sive Conservative education critic. I'm very pleased for him. It's a senior promotion for him as a new member, and I think you're going to do extremely well, Rob.

Rob mentioned today in question period the issue—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to refer to other members by their title or their riding.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Certainly, Speaker. The problem is, I can't remember his riding at the moment.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Cambridge.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Okay; the member from Cambridge.

He mentioned the teacher who received the Premier's teachers' award. So he received the teacher of the year award. His name is Jason Trinh. He was hand-picked to design a summer math camp, credited with helping to boost grade 9 math scores. Because of regulation 274—and this is very well documented—Jason Trinh cannot find a job in the province of Ontario. Despite being the person the Premier of Ontario thinks is the best teacher, he can't get a job because of this regulation, which tells me there is something significantly wrong with regulation 274, which is why I think it needs to be repealed and replaced with a more suitable framework at the board level, working with the ministry, on how to deal with fair hiring.

I believe that the fallout from this current regulation has proved counterproductive to the government-stated goal of ensuring a higher-quality education for our students. When we don't place the needs of our students first and we, instead, place the union leadership first, we have a problem because we have lost sight at that very moment of why we have an education system in Ontario. I have argued many times in this assembly and many times outside of it that the number one priority for us in the education system is to educate students, not to pacify union leaders, which is what has become the stated end-game of this government.

I want to read into the record the Ontario Principals' Council's open letter. They actually say what I've just mentioned: "In our view, the fallout from this regulation has proved counterproductive to the government's stated goal of ensuring a high-quality education for our kids. When we don't place the needs of students first, we cannot ensure that the result will be a positive outcome for them."

Howard Goodman of the Toronto District School Board said that regulation 274 may violate boards' obligations to have a diverse workforce under the Human Rights Code.

Dean Ron Owston of York University's faculty of education said, "The diversity of our students has definitely grown, so if you're hiring teachers who graduated a few years ago and have been occasional teachers for a longer time, they may not be as diverse a group."

I have Pete Wyspianski, who is a teacher. He says, "I have been teaching in northern Ontario communities for years. Many ... teachers come to the north for a few years to gain teaching experience and the schools benefit from

their training and enthusiasm. Under this regulation, new teachers are disincentivized to teach in the north; they will have to start their teaching careers on the supply list of their desired school board in southern Ontario."

Another teacher, Quinton Kuschei, says, "Seniority" is no measure of care of children, competence, professionalism, experience, commitment, ability" or "proficiency."

Then I hear a parent, Greg Synowicki: "My biggest concern is that by hiring based on seniority and not taking performance into account, you're creating the potential of not having the best teacher teaching your kid."

Finally, from Michael Barrett, the president of the Ontario Public School Boards' Association—he said he has little faith in the discussions, and called the regulation "an absolute tragedy."

Speaker, I just want to point out that there are three major concerns I have with this based on what I've read into the record from these stakeholders and parents and principals and teachers. The first is, let's point out this northern and remote rural community issue. It is going to be very difficult to attract teachers into those teaching positions if you are going to strip them of seniority when they move board to board. We are going to have a real challenge in rural Ontario and remote communities, particularly up north, if we keep regulation 274.

1550

Secondly, one of the things I was very impressed with during my time as a critic of education was travelling through diverse communities, particularly in the GTA. On many of those occasions, we met with teachers or parents from very diverse communities. As stated in my previous remarks, from one of the quotes from Dean Ron Owston of York University, it is going to become increasingly more difficult to ensure that people who understand the school community and the diversity in that community are actually placed in that community if you are going to deal solely with seniority.

Third, and this I think bears repeating, is the fact that if a teacher in the Catholic education system wants to move to the public education system or they want to move elsewhere in the Catholic system, to another district, they will lose their seniority. That isn't fair. If the stated objective of the education ministry of Ontario is to make sure our students are learning at an above-average rate and that they can compete with people across the world once they graduate, what we should be doing is making sure the best teacher, not the longest-serving union activist, is in front of that class. I will be unapologetic, as I've stated. I think that is exactly why we should be here.

Now, I know the government is going to say that they have a table and they are discussing it, and that's fine. But the problem with that is very clearly this: They are acknowledging that regulation 274 is a challenge, they are acknowledging that it shouldn't have been there in the first place, and they are actually working backwards to try to come up with a suitable solution to the challenge they place on school boards, on principals and these

extraordinary teachers who are being refused positions in the teaching profession.

I'm here today because I think it's the wrong thing. I think it was the wrong move for the government. I have been consistent on this message for well over a year. I am here today with my passion and my enthusiasm and my heart in the right place, telling the government it's okay to admit you got this wrong. We would encourage you to support this legislation, and I look forward to a very spirited and important debate. But make no mistake: If we want the best students and the brightest students in the world, we have to have the best teachers in the world and in this province teaching in our classrooms.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would like to welcome the former member for Oakville South and Oakville in the 35th, 36th and 37th Parliaments, as well as the former Speaker in the 37th Parliament, sitting in our east gallery: Mr. Gary Carr.

Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise in support of my colleague from Nepean—Carleton. I'm quite curious to hear what both the NDP and Liberal caucuses have to say, given the fact they haven't stood up. I do expect there's going to be a battle to see who has the last say on this bill.

Nevertheless, I think the member from Nepean—Carleton has brought forth a worthy piece of legislation, worthy of consideration in this Legislature. I think we have to do our utmost to ensure that students and their parents are assured that the best teachers are teaching in our classrooms. I would say that Ontario is full of good teachers. Our teachers do amazing things each and every day.

What I also would say, in saying that, is that sometimes people's expertise, people's skills, may be better in some areas than in others. Every school has different needs. A school might have more need to have experts in math or different extracurricular activities, coaches in different sports, music teachers, and all the kinds of things I think students like in their schools and where they remember the fantastic teachers they've had.

All we're saying with this bill is that we want to make sure the principal has the tools necessary at their disposal to select the best person for that job, given the nuances and differences that exist in each school. This is about nothing more than ensuring that the best teachers are in the classrooms, to ensure that our parents know that when they send their kids to school, that experience is going to be unrivalled and that their children will come home with that enthusiasm to learn and talk about the great stories and the great memories they're making each and every day in our schools.

I know that earlier, in question period, I asked the Minister for Education about this issue, and she stated to the Legislature that they're speaking with their partners in education in terms of dealing with amending regulation 274, if it was in fact a mistake. But she never says who those partners in education are. I would hope that the government, in considering who their partners in

education are, doesn't forget that parents and their kids are partners in education and do have a willingness to talk about the mechanics of regulation 274.

We're not standing on the side of any particular special interest, Mr. Speaker. We just want to make sure that the teachers who are standing in front of our classroom each and every day—have an opportunity to learn from the very best person available to do that job. That's all it is. It's very simple. This isn't a Liberal bill, a PC bill or an NDP bill. It isn't pro-union or anti-union. This is about making sure our parents have the confidence that their students and their kids are being taught by the very best person for the job. I think that's what we need in the province of Ontario: the understanding that the person at the front of the class is selected for the job based on merit, a principle that has built this great province.

I remember very early on in my tenure as the MPP for Cambridge meeting with a group of Catholic principals who talked very persuasively, in my view, about this bill. They talked about how in their school they had a coach—and I can't remember if it was for volleyball or hockey, whatever the case. I think there was actually a couple who were coaching those teams as occasional teachers. What was happening was that when the semester was over, the contracts were up, the principals were forced to have different teachers, and the teachers that were coming in couldn't do that extracurricular activity. That meant the principal in that school either had to make the decision to add to his or her duties and run the sport or the extracurricular activity themselves or that that activity would be cancelled.

What we're suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is that each and every school has different challenges, different nuances, different items that they have to realize and have different categories and characteristics that they're looking for. Sometimes, in diverse communities, we have a desire to hire a teacher who could be a role model for students from that diverse community, but if we're simply making selections of teachers based on a seniority list, we ignore the fact that we could actually have a teacher who reflects the diversity of that school. Why wouldn't we want, at the end of the day, somebody who can be a role model for our students, as our teachers are each and every day, in our schools today, someone who comes from a particular religious or ethnic background, teaching in those schools?

At the end of the day, that is at the heart of what we're doing with this bill, Mr. Speaker. It speaks to what parents are asking for and what I think students want. They want the best person in the classroom, teaching our kids.

I know we talked about Jason Trinh earlier today, and the member from Nepean—Carleton did the same thing. The person who won the Premier's New Teacher of the Year Award—the Premier's New Teacher of the Year Award—is having a problem finding a job in the province of Ontario. I think that is one of the greatest travesties to our young people. Our young people who

have all the enthusiasm and would love to work here in the province of Ontario just simply can't find a job, even though they are the teacher of the year, the very people we want teaching our kids on a daily basis.

So we have a problem with regulation 274. We need to end the practice of seniority-based hiring and make sure that principals have the tools necessary to hire the best person for the job. That's all I'm asking for from this Legislature: to consider the merits of that conversation and to support the member from Nepean—Carleton in her bill. Let's get on with making sure that our kids are put on the strongest footing possible.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to stand today and debate Bill 107, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to hiring practices for teachers. I think it's important that I offer a bit more clarity about the existing regulation regarding fair hiring provisions in our school boards, and I'm also concerned the member opposite has actually not quite done her homework about the impact her bill would have on the education sector—but a bit more about that later.

I think we can all agree, everybody here, that we all want great teachers in our classrooms, and we do—we have them. But it's also important that our teachers can count on a fair, consistent and transparent hiring process, regardless of where they may work or want to work in the province. That's the overarching principle of why we brought in reg 274: to ensure that clear and consistent hiring practices existed in all school boards.

We think it's important that each board has a process that ensures applicants know what jobs are available and when through job postings. It's important for applicants to know who is eligible to apply for those jobs and what criteria will be used to fill those positions, and it's important for applicants to know why they were unsuccessful so they can apply that feedback for future available positions.

While these types of processes are common in most industries and certainly common in the Ontario public service, I think many people would be surprised to know that they were not happening in all school boards. In fact, school boards across the province had inconsistent hiring practices, with some not even posting jobs that might be available.

Our intention with reg 274 was to provide some level of consistency and transparency in hiring practices across the education sector. The regulation worked to ensure teaching candidates are chosen by school boards based on a number of criteria beyond just seniority.

However, I recognize that since we introduced this regulation, there have been some concerns raised by school boards, teacher federations and individual teachers about the impact of the regulation. We've never claimed the regulation was perfect, which is why we have made it clear from the beginning that we are willing to make changes to the regulation as long as teacher federations

and school board associations are supportive of the changes.

I also want to be clear that any changes that can be agreed to between the parties would need to maintain a consistent, transparent hiring practice. We believe the best way forward is to work together with our boards and teacher representatives to arrive at solutions that work for all the parties.

To encourage a collaborative approach, we have established a working group with the English public secondary school teachers, and we're finalizing a working group with the English public elementary school teachers. These working groups would include representatives from school boards and teacher federations, and we're open to amending the regulation to reflect any changes agreed to by the parties at these working groups.

We have also engaged a team of experts to gather input and discuss potential improvements to the regulation where all parties are supportive. I've asked the team, which is being led by Dr. Charles Ungerleider—who some of you may recognize as the former deputy minister of education from British Columbia—and Ruth Baumann, who is chair of Ontario's Curriculum Council and who does have a lot of past experience with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, to report back to me within the month on possible options. Two people who are highly qualified and deeply understand the education system are going to be working with us to help look for solutions.

I would urge any school board reps or any teachers to speak to their respective association or federation, as the case may be, so that we get as much input as possible.

In addition, the same team of experts will be going around and looking at what the actual impacts of the regulation are with respect to hiring in each board, because we know the way in which this regulation has been implemented actually varies significantly from board to board.

They will be gathering information about what are effective practices, what's working, what's not working, so that we can all work together to come to a consensus about what would be the best way to move as we go forward.

We certainly would welcome any input from the opposition about what they think an amended regulation would look like, because we're interested in what various people think about where this should go forward.

But we do need to work together, which is exactly why the answer is not what the member opposite is suggesting. She's suggesting that the regulation simply be repealed. We really don't think repealing is the answer, because we don't think that repealing the regulation is going to do what the member actually thinks.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You didn't do your homework. You didn't read the bill.

Hon. Liz Sandals: The regulation that is currently in place—

Interjection.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I would suggest you might want to listen to this. The regulation that is currently in place

simply formalizes requirements that already exist in local collective agreements between federations and school boards; that is to say, even if you repeal the regulation, school boards would still be obligated to follow the underlying collective agreement, and the underlying collective agreement reflects the wording in the 2012 memorandum of understanding with the Ontario English Catholic Teachers Association.

So if we repeal the regulation, as this bill requires, and in fact says we can't replace it with another regulation—

Mr. Grant Crack: Oh, she did read it.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Yes, she did read it.

If we simply repeal this regulation, what we are actually left with is a collective agreement that essentially says the same thing.

In fact, if the member opposite were actually to research the language in the underlying collective agreement, she would find that, if anything, it is probably more restrictive than the regulation she is proposing we repeal. So not only do we think it's wrong to simply go around repealing; we don't even think that repealing does what the member expects it to do.

When she introduced the bill, I don't think that she thought repealing the regulation would leave her with a collective agreement that says exactly the same thing. I certainly don't think that the members of the public who say they're supporting this bill understand that the impact of repealing the regulation is to leave you with a collective agreement that says almost exactly the same thing. So the bill doesn't actually do what the member thinks it will.

Let's talk a little bit about some of the other things you would actually have to do to get to where the member wants to be. To actually get to where the member wants to be, which is to make the whole thing go away, you would have to rip up the collective agreements. I don't think that's what we want to do, because unlike the member opposite, we don't think that ripping up collective agreements and getting rid of teachers is the thing we want to do.

We do, I think, have a situation here where this is philosophically the wrong thing to do, but it's actually legally the wrong thing to do.

I will not be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is my great pleasure today to rise and speak in support of the member from Nepean–Carleton's Bill 107, the Fair Hiring to Support Teachers, Parents and Students Act. Speaker, this is about the students. It's not about a seniority process that has been put in place.

1610

I think about, when I was listening to the Minister of Education reference the fact that they have a fair and transparent hiring process—fair hiring process? I question seniority when, in fact, we're looking and talking about having the best teachers in the classroom. She, by her own admission, did state that we think we all want

the best teachers in the classrooms for our students. So I believe she may have contradicted herself.

The member from Nepean–Carleton has been a tireless defender of students across Ontario as our former education critic. While her portfolio has changed, her commitment to students and teachers remains. We heard her passion, her commitment. We heard her heart; it's in the right place, because she wants to do the right thing. Speaker, I wish her the best as she sets her sights on our province's energy woes.

Bill 107 is sorely needed, as it would scrap the controversial regulation 274. This regulation prohibits school boards and principals from hiring the best and brightest students, forcing them instead to choose from those most senior in a local union. Yes, I said "local union." No, I'm not union-bashing. This isn't about that. This is about getting the right teachers for the students, doing what is right.

Seniority, while we recognize it is important, should not be the only criteria for hiring teachers. A more practical solution would be to allow school boards to implement a fair hiring policy.

Last week, we rejected, this Legislature turned down, Bill 101, which had to do with third party advertising, which was really all about transparency and democracy. Well, Speaker, Bill 107 is all about democracy, giving principals and school boards the decision, the right, to make and select the best teachers possible for our students.

An Ontario College of Teachers survey of 2011 graduates made a shocking discovery: This survey of the 2011 graduates found that one third were unable to find jobs in their field. This is a massive increase compared to just 3% in 2006. In fact, many new teachers today can't even find supply teaching jobs.

While I'm on that topic, I might as well suggest that right now, that particular policy—when a teacher retires, then suddenly that teacher, if they choose, can go on a supply teaching list. They're double-dipping. They're getting their pension—paid for by the public, the taxpayers—and now, all of a sudden, they're back in the classroom. And if they don't know what that subject is—for example, math—well, guess what the students have, Speaker? They have a spare. But that teacher still gets a lot of money.

So, Speaker, in conclusion, I just want to support and let you know that the member from Nepean–Carleton's bill—repeal this harmful regulation and make sure all our children have the best possible teachers at the head of their class.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to have to talk really fast now. I, again, would like to applaud my colleague Lisa MacLeod for bringing this good piece of legislation. It's all about fairness and ensuring that our children have the best teacher, the most qualified teacher, not the person who happens to have been around the longest on the union rolls. We need to ensure that we have the teachers

there that are going to inspire our children and give them the hope and the education that they need, because they are our truest and greatest asset.

We need to ensure that we have teaching professionals' mobility. We're concerned that that happens. Within a board, how do they move, or they won't be able to move within Ontario, because they're going to be more concerned about seniority than moving to somewhere where there may be need.

Speaker, we want the stability of teaching staff. We want them to ensure that they're staying in the profession, because some people are going to leave this profession if they aren't having an opportunity. I think Rob, my colleague from Cambridge, mentioned earlier that we have an award-winning teacher who is 800th on the seniority list. Are they going to leave the teaching profession? Are they going to leave Ontario, one of our brightest and best will go, and our children will suffer as a result?

Speaker, it's all about fairness. It's all about the children that we are here to serve, our greatest asset, and ensuring that they get the best education from the absolute best teacher, with nothing to do with how long they've been on the payroll.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to introduce Paul Elliott, who's the president of OSSTF, who's here joining us and listening to the debate; and also Paul Kossta, who's one of the executive officers. Welcome. It's good that you're here.

I really do appreciate some of the concerns that the member from Nepean-Carleton raises around this particular matter, but not all the concerns. Some of them, I believe, are quite incorrect. But one of the main concerns that I worry about as well is the fact that those who graduate, those who become teachers and go looking for work in that first year will find it difficult to find a job—this is true. That's something that I believe we have to look at; I understand that.

But all the other arguments made by many of the Conservative members who have spoken are completely wrong. When they say, for example, that we want the best person in the classroom—is there anyone here who doesn't want that? Is there anything in regulation 274 that prevents that from happening? I argue no. Most of you don't realize or know how that process works.

We all want the best person, teacher, in the classroom, because we worry about our kids and we want them to get the best education. Who doesn't? So when one of the members talks about a letter that she may have received where the person says that we don't take performance into account, that is absolutely wrong, because performance is part of what principals have to do under this regulation 274. They will have to do a performance review. When teachers go as long-term occasionals, they will get the experience, and there will be a review. Part of that experience allows the principal to know whether they're actually doing a good job or not. That's what it means to base it on performance.

Here's the other problem, and it's a big problem, and it's something that I think the government has appreciated, because—the Minister of Transportation used to be the minister of post-secondary education. We had a little exchange in the committee of estimates. It is true that the majority of members here don't realize how many graduate as teachers each and every year. Most ministers don't know it, and sometimes even the ministers who become ministers don't know it because they haven't had a chance to review their file long enough. But there are 11,000 people, young men and women, who graduate as teachers each and every year.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's 9,000.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It used to be 9,000. Now, Minister, you are new on the file, but it used to be 9,500, I thought. But when I asked the then minister of post-secondary education, the staff behind him had to give him a number, and the number they gave him was 11,000. I used to think it was 9,500; I was wrong. There are 11,000 who graduate as teachers each and every year, and do you know how many people we hire each and every year?

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I think it's less than 3,000, but it would be good to see those numbers, because my suspicion is it's around 3,000 that we hire each and every year.

Think of that. We allow so many to get into the system under the guise or pretense that they're going to be hired as teachers, only to discover that, in the end, a little more than a third end up being hired. That means the other two thirds are looking for work in that profession and outside of that profession. It means they're desperately trying to get on a supply teachers list. Some get on; many will not get on. And you can't hire them all because there's no room for all the supply teachers, so some automatically will not get on that list. But you have to assume that, currently, boards are doing a good job of sorting out those who will be permanent teachers, those who will be long-term occasionals and those who will be occasional supply teachers on a daily basis; you have to assume that they're doing a good job of sorting those who are great and those who might not be that great.

But to say, as some of the Conservative members have said, that we're shutting out all the great potential teachers and leaving only those who have seniority who are not good is fundamentally mistaken and wrong. You can't do that. It's almost a dangerous thing to say. It's almost irresponsible to say.

1620

I advise members that they have to approach this with some care. I appreciate the concerns that some of you have raised, particularly around those who graduated and in the first year will have a difficult time getting into the system. That's a real issue, and I understand it. But to say that experienced teachers are not good is wrong.

What it says is that those people who graduate and can't find a permanent job desperately stay on as supply teachers for long-term occasional jobs or day-to-day jobs.

They'll be there for a couple of years, hoping the system will hire them eventually as permanent teachers. Many of those people are good. Many of those people end up getting long-term occasional jobs, and that's how we test them out. If principals feel that some of those fellows or women are not very good, well, they won't get the permanent jobs. The better ones will. Isn't that what we want? Isn't that what you want? That's what I want. It's what I think you want, and it's what I think parents want.

Let me read what Regulation 274 does. I appreciate the fact that only one teacher federation was negotiating with the province, and that was a little problem; there's no doubt about it. If the other federations were a part of it, we might have been able to get something better out of this regulation. But the government chose to only work with one federation, and in my humble view, that was a mistake.

By the way, when the minister says, "We don't break contracts"—please, it's almost embarrassing. Bill 115 is an embarrassment, and it's a contradiction of what you, Minister, said on this file.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Rosario, the social contract.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Jimmy, Minister of the Environment, you would have learned from Bob Rae, given that you've been here for so long. I'm assuming, given that Bob Rae is now a close friend of yours, that he would have talked to you about some of the problems we had around it. I would have felt, and I still think, that you would have learned from that experience and not come up with Bill 115.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Based on what you just said, based on what you just did, I'm sure that in caucus you must have said to the then Premier, "You can't do this." I'm sure you did—you, hopefully, and others. But maybe they didn't listen to you; I don't know.

Regulation 274 provisions: School boards must establish a roster of occasional teachers and a long-term occasional teachers list, and teachers are ranked on both lists based on seniority. An occasional teacher may apply for the LTO list—that's long-term occasional, by the way—once she has been on the roster for at least 10 months and has taught as an occasional teacher with the school board for at least 20 days during a 10-month period.

School boards must grant an interview for the LTO list to every occasional teacher on the roster who meets the conditions established in the regulations. Boards then determine, through interviews, which occasional teachers will be placed on the LTO list. Only occasional teachers on the LTO list who have completed a minimum of one LTO assignment at least four months long and have both the required qualifications and the highest seniority ranking can be considered for permanent positions.

When hiring for LTO and permanent positions, school boards must post the position on their website for at least five weekdays, and boards are required to interview five occasional teachers from the LTO list who have both the required qualifications and the highest seniority ranking.

This is not a bad thing. It's not so bad at all. They are required in a way that creates fairness and transparency for the hiring process, posting all of the long-term assignments and permanent positions so everyone is aware of available opportunities, with the same hiring procedures and evaluation criteria employed by all boards. It ensures that unsuccessful candidates get feedback after job interviews, which is something that I think you want, and boards are required to evaluate the performance of long-term occasional teachers and provide feedback to teachers.

All this, in my view, is not bad. It's not bad at all, with one proviso and one worry that I have that I realize is an issue. I understand that. But those who have been waiting for years and who have the experience and who are evaluated by principals based on that experience, not to give them an opportunity for those long-term occasional jobs and for those permanent jobs is wrong.

I have to say that I trust the ability of boards to do this well and to hire the best possible teachers so that students can get the best possible education. I believe that's what we've got and that's what we all want. Seniority equals experience. Experience is good. I would want a teacher who has had some experience teaching the children rather than someone fresh out of the faculty teaching my kids. I would want that experience. That is not a negative thing at all. It should be a positive thing that Tories and most Liberals, I would hope, would agree with.

What we have to deal with is the fact that we accept 11,000 students in our faculties, and they will not get a job. The government has the power to deal with that, and you are not dealing with that. That's the biggest problem.

Hon. Brad Duguid: We are so. Pay attention to your file.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I beg your pardon?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: He said they're cutting enrolment.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You are not doing that. You are—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask all members to take their seats. There's like 25 conversations going on in here. I would love to hear the speaker. If I can request of the speaker that you speak through the Speaker and not have a dialogue across the way.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The government has the power to limit the number of teachers that go into faculties so that they have a better chance of getting into a teaching position. To allow so many to become teachers and not be able to get a job at the end of it is a travesty of justice.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Once again, can I ask members to take their seats and keep the noise down.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it has been, in my past, a privilege to have worked with the member for Nepean—Carleton on a number of different initiatives. Let me just

remind the House of some of the things that were said today on her bill. The member herself said that it's okay to admit that you got this wrong. Our colleague from Cambridge said that this is not a Conservative or a Liberal bill. Our good friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex told us all that this is about the students.

I happen to agree with all of those statements. In the spirit in which we practise as MPPs in this House, I'm here to offer a constructive comment that I think the member may need to take into account.

Let me quote from the bill. It says:

"Nepotism

"(1.2) The policy shall prohibit a board from deciding to assign or appoint a person to a position as a teacher if the board, in making the decision, accords greater weight to nepotism than to any other factor, such as the person's teaching qualifications."

Now, I would like to take that and just do a slight rephrasing because the way I rephrase it—under the bill proposed by the member, this is legal. That would be to rephrase this same clause to read, "The policy shall allow a board to decide to assign or appoint a person to a position as a teacher if the board, in making the decision, accords equal weight to nepotism as to any other factor, such as the person's teaching qualifications."

Now, this is not the member's intent. I am going to have to give her the benefit of the doubt. But it is surely the outcome. To put it another way, the conversation in the hall could go a bit like this: "So, J.B., the superintendent's daughter-in-law's relationship to you is about equal to the other candidate's qualifications and experience." That means the daughter-in-law can get hired.

1630

Now the hard part is that that is indeed a fatal flaw in the bill as proposed, and I say this to the member as a fellow legislator.

Speaker, for reasons that are purely logical and having nothing to do with whatever underlying motivation the member may have, I can't support the bill. The reg overrides the bill, and if we repeat the reg, we get the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean-Carleton, you have two minutes.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a real pleasure to wrap up debate on this very important piece of legislation. It is unfortunate that the Liberals and the New Democrats used their time to trip over each other to try and get the support of the Working Families Coalition while, on this side of the House, the Ontario Progressive Conservatives are standing up for students in classrooms across this great province.

I'd also like to point out that I felt so badly for the minister when she got up to speak about the bill, not having read it. It actually was quite embarrassing. But again, Speaker, this is a minister who forgot to read the curriculum and told Ontario parents that that's not her job. I'll tell you what her job is: It's to make sure that the best teachers in Ontario's classrooms are there, not because they've been the longest-serving in the union but because they have the best experience, they have the best

qualities, and they have the merit of being the best teacher there. That is why people like the Ontario Principals' Council, the school boards' associations of Ontario and two student trustees from the Toronto District School Board are here today: because they know this is the way forward.

I might also add that this is a government that brought in Bill 115. We supported it and said we do not want this type of hiring clause in that bill. What did they do? They snuck it in by regulation. Yet when they decided that they wanted to back away from Bill 115 to support their union friends, they left this offensive piece of regulation on the books. So if she wants to talk about repealing it and replacing it, that's our plan. Their plan is just to continue to give more to OSSTF and ETFO.

If I may, while I have 20 seconds left, I want to point out that teachers' unions across this province have said one thing to their members and another thing to this assembly. The teachers across this province support this bill, and I'm ashamed that the Liberal government refuses to accept that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES TECHNIQUES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 46, standing in the name of Mr. McDonell.

Mr. McDonell has moved second reading of Bill 61, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this vote at the end of private members' public business.

TRANSPARENCY IN MEMBERS' EXPENSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE EN MATIÈRE DES DÉPENSES DES DÉPUTÉS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Fraser has moved second reading of Bill 108, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to put it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee. Agreed? Agreed.

FAIR HIRING TO SUPPORT TEACHERS, PARENTS AND STUDENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PRATIQUES D'ENGAGEMENT ÉQUITABLES À L'APPUI DES ENSEIGNANTS, DES PARENTS ET DES ÉLÈVES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. MacLeod has moved second reading of Bill 107, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to hiring practices for teachers.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1635 to 1640.

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES TECHNIQUES ET LA SÉCURITÉ

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. McDonnell has moved second reading of Bill 61, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	O'Toole, John
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Elliott, Christine	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Holyday, Douglas C.	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fraser, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Prue, Michael

Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Del Duca, Steven	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 46.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can we open the doors up and let the members in?

FAIR HIRING TO SUPPORT TEACHERS, PARENTS AND STUDENTS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES PRATIQUES D'ENGAGEMENT ÉQUITABLES À L'APPUI DES ENSEIGNANTS, DES PARENTS ET DES ÉLÈVES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. MacLeod has moved second reading of Bill 107, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to hiring practices for teachers.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	O'Toole, John
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Elliott, Christine	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Holyday, Douglas C.	Miller, Norm	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Forster, Cindy	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fraser, John	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Prue, Michael
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Damerla, Dipika	Mangat, Amrit	Singh, Jagmeet
Del Duca, Steven	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	Zimmer, David
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	
Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 27; the nays are 46.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just for the record, was Mr. Bailey's vote counted?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order: Was Mr. Bailey's vote counted?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Yes, Mr. Bailey did vote.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

If I could just have your attention for a second: I want to wish everyone a happy Thanksgiving and a great constituency week.

How about a big hand for our pages?

Applause.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until October 21 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1648.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
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Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziatti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
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Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

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Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Michael Harris, Rob Leone
Amrit Mangat, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Mitzie Hunter, Monte McNaughton
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
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permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
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Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
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Jonah Schein
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permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

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Garfield Dunlop, Cindy Forster
Lisa MacLeod, Amrit Mangat
Michael Mantha
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des comptes publics**

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Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, Jerry J. Ouellette
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Monte Kwinter
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Helena Jaczek, Jane McKenna
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
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de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 21 October 2013

Lundi 21 octobre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 21 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 21 octobre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm delighted to introduce two former members—cabinet ministers and honourable sirs: the honourable John Snobelen and the honourable Elmer Buchanan. Welcome.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm absolutely honoured this morning to introduce to the Legislature Emma Hill. She's here with her parents, Christine and Mark.

Emma is an ambassador for the Holland Bloorview hospital. She's an absolute inspiration, an amazing speaker. I have no doubt that she'll find a seat down here one day if she keeps on the track she's been on. Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to introduce her today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? The member from Oak Ridges–Markham—Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I want to extend a special welcome to Kirsten Rudyk, who is a University of Toronto student and the niece of my good friend Bob Yaciuk, who will be joining us today here in the Legislature. She's interested in the proceedings of this place, and we look forward to having her here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member, as I was looking at two other people standing and I wasn't sure which one I was going to acknowledge. I apologize to the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to welcome the students of the grade 10 civics class from Francis Libermann Catholic High School in the great riding of Scarborough–Rouge River. They're here visiting today in the west gallery with their teacher, Stephanie DeProphetis.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome—we have some delegates from Kenya, Mr. Speaker, this morning—MP Patrick Wangamati and his entire entourage from Kenya as well. I welcome them. They'll be coming in shortly.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to introduce to the world my newest granddaughter. Evelyn Margaret Lang Wallace was born Saturday morning in Peterborough, and she and her mother and father and brother are all doing great.

Ms. Cindy Forster: There are some guests from Port Colborne who are here today: Gene Paggeto, Richard

Vittore, Ron Smith and Bob Saracino, who's here for an Ontario Senior Achievement award today.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm so happy to welcome the first page from Essex county since I've been elected, Benjamin Diab, who attends Holy Cross Catholic School. He's a page here serving from October 24 to November 7, and Evan Tanovich is also serving as a page. I want to welcome them here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition coming from the Speaker, we do honour our former members. In the gallery with us today is John Snobelen from Mississauga North in the 36th and Mississauga West in the 37th Parliament. Welcome, John. We're glad you're here with us. And Elmer Buchanan from Hastings–Peterborough was in the 35th. Thank you very much for joining us today in the gallery.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. In light of the gas plant scandal and the \$1 billion wasted to save Liberal seats and cancel the Oakville gas plant, we asked the House to sit longer to debate that. You refused to do so. I'm also worried that you're renegeing on our deal.

A month or so ago, you and I sat down in your office. We agreed to clear the decks on legislation that was not really focused on jobs and the economy in large part so that would pave the way for you to put forward your jobs plan. We have yet to see that plan. You have moved from tanning bed legislation now to restaurant menus, but I've not seen anything when it comes to jobs or balancing the books in the province.

I wrote you a follow-up letter asking if we could sit down so I could see your plan. Let me ask you, Premier, bottom line, why are you renegeing on our deal?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, we did have that conversation and the conversation went like this: I suggested that there were some pieces of legislation that we could move ahead with, that we could find agreement on, so that we could continue to have debates about some other things that maybe we didn't agree on. One of the things that we don't agree on is the path forward, because I think what the Leader of the Opposition is suggesting is that we would adopt his plan to slash and cut public services in this province. That is not what we're going to do.

Instead, what we're going to do is, we're going to invest in people, we're going to invest in infrastructure and we're going to invest in a business climate that is going to create jobs. For example, we've committed \$17.6 million to support regions and businesses in this province. That's leveraged over \$133.1 million in investments and it's created or retained nearly 2,800 jobs. That's just one piece of the work that we are doing. In fact, the Leader of the Opposition didn't support that strategy for regional encouragement of jobs, and that is confusing at best.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Before we move on, just as a comment, I will not allow shouting people down anymore.

Supplementary?

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, maybe there's some confusion. I thought we had agreed we would clear the decks so you could bring forward your jobs plan. It seems like you want to clear the decks so you can bring legislation around restaurant menus, as opposed to our vision, which is paving the way for more jobs and more opportunity for Ontarians.

Premier, a million people began this week with no job to go to. They're losing hope in this great province. I worry that your ideology blinds you to the challenges we face or what's necessary to turn our economy around. You know that if interest rates go up that will put on another \$500 million of debt interest, taking away our ability to hire more nurses or do more MRIs.

Clearly, you ran to be Premier for some reason other than to have that office. It has been nine months of endless study, conversations and consultations. Where is the big plan? Where are the ideas? Where is the hope and opportunity? We've got that plan. You're welcome to steal it; just ask. Where's yours?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On top of the regional development strategy, which has created or has helped 2,800 jobs, I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition talk to some of the folks who work in the Ford plant, because I think he would want to support that \$70.9-million investment in the Ford plant that will protect more than 2,800 jobs and allow Ford to take part in global trade.

He also might want to talk to people in small businesses who understand that the Supporting Small Businesses Act is going to help them with their payroll; it's going to allow them to hire more people.

Those are actions that we're taking, along with the Local Food Act, which will encourage and support more jobs in the agri-food sector, and the Waste Reduction Act, which will create jobs.

All of those are part of our strategy to make investments in people and infrastructure and in a business climate that will allow the private sector to create jobs. That is happening, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, we've put a plan on the table to create over 300,000 good jobs in manufacturing, to get energy prices under control, to lower taxes, to change the attitude of government and get out of the way of business, to stop always be standing in the way of job creation and get behind—so they'll invest and create jobs again. All I hear from you is more warmed-over old NDP ideas that, quite frankly, got us into a deep ditch back in the 1990s.

Let me ask you this, at least. It has been a month since we agreed to clear the decks. You've brought forward no plan. I wrote you almost three weeks ago. You've not responded to my letter to meet to discuss your plan as of yet. I'm worried that you have no plan. So will you stand up in the House today—I know that the economic statement is coming shortly. Will that be a game changer for the province? Will that be a moment of truth? Will we finally see the Kathleen vision—vision—Kathleen Wynne vision? That was a tough one. I've got to rehearse these more often. I've got to try that one more often.

Will we actually see what your plan is? Because you only have two moments: a budget and the economic statement every year. You wasted the budget. So please, it's got to be the economic statement.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

I suspect there was a reason why you fumbled over it—he knows that we're not supposed to use proper names in here; I think that was the problem. You stumbled over it. So I'm going to remind all members: Please use either title or riding when referring in the House. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not offended by the Leader of the Opposition calling me by my first name.

What our fall economic statement will not do is adopt the Conservatives' agenda, which will fire 10,000 education workers, fire 2,000 health care workers, drive wages down with harmful right-to-work legislation—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, come to order. The member from Northumberland—no, I was thinking of whether I should or shouldn't, but I will—Northumberland—Quinte West.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we will not adopt that plan, which we believe would undermine the progress of the province, would not provide for a future of well-educated workers, would not create an environment where investment wants to come to this province. That is what is happening now. Jobs are being created. We are investing in a business climate that's innovative and dynamic.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, my question this morning is for the finance minister. Minister, our party has

cleared the decks so you can present your jobs plan to the Legislature. We're still waiting to see it. You've been in office for nine months, held 100 conversations and created 32 panels, and yet there's still no plan to create jobs and kick-start our economy.

But your jobs plan isn't the only thing that's AWOL, Minister. The Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act, which your government passed, states, "Within two years after each provincial election, the minister shall release a long-range assessment of Ontario's fiscal environment." Minister, you're two weeks late. When will you be releasing this assessment that you were legally required to release two weeks ago?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question. I appreciate the fact that the member opposite is actually interested in knowing how to increase and promote economic growth in our great province.

He recognizes that we have achieved results. He knows full well that we've had a plan that's working. We have 180% return of those jobs that suffered during the recession. We are the top jurisdiction around the world, exceeding our targets. We are the lowest-cost government in all of Canada, at all orders of government. We have the most competitive tax regime to stimulate investment, and it is working.

We have a fall economic statement that's coming out shortly. We've produced first-quarter results that achieve our opportunities and that show the success we've had to date. Public accounts, audited public accounts, show that we exceed our targets.

We are coming forward with a long-term plan beyond the election-cycle politics that the opposition want to play. We're not going there, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, that assessment isn't optional. You're legislated to do this. The act spells out the specific areas the assessment is to report on. Your predecessors actually did meet this requirement, but apparently you can't. You're running afoul of your own government's law. But then again, we've seen from the deleted gas plant emails that breaking the law seems to be nothing new over on this side.

Maybe you're working hard behind the scenes to get creative with the numbers—like you did on the gas plants—to hide your failed wage freeze, which we exposed last week.

Minister, in nine months, you've put forward no plan to create jobs, no plan to stimulate the economy and no plan to balance the budget. Do you have any plan at all to present your long-term fiscal assessment?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, not only do we have a plan, we have results that are working according to that plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The plan has been outlined a number of times—which the opposition choose not to read. The upcoming fall economic statement will highlight some of those issues.

What the opposition must recognize is that what they talk about is actually a destructive plan. We will not take extreme views on across-the-board cuts that will harm the sensitive recovery of our province.

We have taken measures of austerity to a point that's necessary, but now we must stimulate economic growth. We will continue to invest in people, we're going to continue to invest in infrastructure, and we're going to continue to ensure our economy grows by—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Minister, let's recap the last nine months. There's no jobs plan, no plan to stimulate economic growth, no plan to balance the budget and no long-term assessment. It's clear that you're not up to the job on this file, Minister. It only stands to reason that Ontarians can expect another whole lot of nothing when you present your fall economic statement.

You've shown, through the gas plants scandal, that your government has a lot of trouble with numbers. The least you can do is use this opportunity to finally lay out a plan to get the more than 500,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job back to work.

Minister, it's obvious your fall economic statement won't have a real jobs plan. Will you take our plan, our 14 white papers, and use our ideas to put Ontario back to work?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, if we recall their plan, their plan was to hide a huge deficit. Their plan was to sell assets at fire sale—their plan was to give it away. Their plan left a legacy of an energy problem that we're still paying for today.

We have taken control. We have invested in our province. We're investing in our people. We're investing in infrastructure, and we're creating a climate of economic growth and business development with innovation. We're going to continue on that positive plan. We are not going to fall prey to what they're proposing.

1050

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. News reports indicate that the Premier is creating yet another panel. This time, the conversation will focus on so-called open government.

If the Premier is interested in openness, Speaker, will she commit today to returning to the justice committee to explain her role in the decision that handed over \$1 billion to a private power company?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I haven't received an invitation from the committee. If the member has a question,

I'd be happy to answer that question. I just want to say that I need to know what the new information is that the member is seeking, because I've accepted responsibility as a member of the cabinet that made the decision. I've apologized a number of times. I've explained my role at every step of the process. I've explained every interaction that I've had. I've explained my understanding of the cost estimates that were provided by officials. I appeared at the committee on April 30. I've answered 207 questions in the House. I've responded to the AG report; I responded the day that it was tabled.

I've done all of that, Mr. Speaker. I haven't received an invitation. As I say, I'd be happy to answer a question if the member has a specific question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people learned that Liberal waste is costing them \$1.1 billion, and the auditor tied that cost to decisions signed off on by this Premier. The Premier wants to have a conversation about open government, but people want some answers about the sky-high price of electricity that they're paying in this province.

Will the Premier come to the justice committee and explain why she was signing a document that was helping private power companies guarantee their profits, and putting families and businesses on the hook?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have explained my role in that process, Mr. Speaker. I have explained it in this House and I have explained it at committee. As I say, I have, a number of times, explained my whole interaction and my whole role in the process. The reality is that when I came into this office, I said that we were going to open up the process, and that is exactly what we did.

In fact, my commitment to open government is an expression of a belief that I have always held and that has been manifested by the fact that I have attended the committee; I have opened up the process. We've broadened the scope of the committee and we've provided thousands of documents in answer to the questions that have been asked by committee.

The questions that the leader of the third party is asking are questions that have been asked over and over and over again, and they have been answered over and over and over again. If there is a new question, if there is new information that's being sought, I would like to hear that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has claimed that she doesn't want to have this kind of thing happen again in Ontario, and I can tell her, neither do Ontarians. They're tired of watching their bills go up and up and up, and they want to know why.

People want to understand why the Premier was signing off on decisions that the auditor said clearly favoured private power companies. Will the Premier be coming to the committee to explain why she did that?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I have answered that question. I've talked about my role in

the cabinet walk-around that happened and I have taken responsibility for being part of a government that was in a process and was trying to avoid litigation. We've talked—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm probably going to ask the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek the same question I would ask him if he was in his seat, and that is to come to order, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I spoke the week before last about the advice that we were given—that officials advised us that waiting to relocate the plant could have been more expensive and renegotiating was more prudent than ripping up the agreement. So we were engaged in that process.

But the point is, I have taken responsibility, as a member of cabinet, for that decision. I articulated my role and—

Interjection: Resign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will get you thrown out. If you want to start doing that, I'll start throwing.

Finish, please: 10 seconds.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, just to say that we have provided 175,000 pages of documents and answers to all of the questions that have been asked.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. The Premier loves conversation, and she has the panels to prove it. Now there are 30 groups looking at everything from new tolls and taxes to undoing the damage to the horse racing industry.

Now the Premier is saying she wants a panel on openness. Will she show commitment to openness, Speaker, by coming to the justice committee and explaining why she signed off on a decision that clearly favoured a private power company?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Apart from the tone of the question, I just want to say that I think it's very, very important that government pay attention to people's opinions, that we engage with people, that we get feedback from people outside of government. That is how I have operated as a politician; that is how I will operate as a Premier.

Whether the leader of the third party thinks it's important or not to have people with expertise give us advice, we do believe it's important. We think that it's a very good thing to have people who understand a particular sector, or a particular issue, as, for an example, the open government process. I think it's a good thing for them to give us advice on engagement with the public, and I look forward to that process, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, maybe the Premier and the Liberals should have been listening to the council in Oakville back in March 2009, when they

passed a resolution trying to block the gas plant from being built in the first place.

Ontario families are looking for some real answers about their sky-high hydro bills, not conversation after conversation. Ontario's Auditor General specifically raised a decision that the Premier was part of, in her report on the Oakville gas plant. This government has created such a mess in energy planning that the Premier was signing documents that gave private power companies huge advantages instead of protecting families who pay the bills.

Will the Premier be returning to the justice committee to explain why she was a part of a decision that gave private power companies the upper hand, or is her new openness panel just another smokescreen?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say to the leader of the third party that I agree with her. I have said many, many times that had we paid better attention, had we had a better upfront process in the location of those gas plants, then we would not have made the mistakes that were made. I've said that quite openly, that having a better community process is part of what needed to happen and needs to happen going forward. That's why we're putting a new process in place.

As for the justice committee, I haven't received an invitation, but I have been to the justice committee. I have answered many, many questions in the House and at committee. I have explained my role. If there is new information that's sought, I would be happy to answer that question, but I have been there, and I have not yet received another invitation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, fixing a community process is never going to get rid of the Liberals' penchant for their own self-interests ahead of the interests of Ontarians. That's what Liberals do all the time.

Last week, Ontarians found out that they had seen their electricity bills—were going to see their electricity bills, rather—keep growing faster than the rate of inflation in this province. It's getting harder for them to pay the bills already, and they deserve the answers, Speaker. They deserve to know why the Premier gave up legal protections for ratepayers and gave the upper hand to the private power company.

Will the Premier come to the gas plants committee and explain her decision to protect the interests of private power companies instead of the interests of people and businesses who are stuck paying the highest hydro bills in this country?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, I have been to the committee, and I have answered many, many questions, and I have not received an invitation from the committee at this point.

But, Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, the energy system in this province was in disarray. It had been left in disarray. There were huge investments needed in distribution. The capacity, and the generation capacity, was not what it needed to be.

We have made huge improvements in the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

The member from Glengarry—Prescott—Russell will receive the same advice, or the question, that I asked the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek. If you were in your seat, I'd tell you the same thing I'm going to tell you now: Come to order. She's asking; she's answering.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, the investments that we have made in the energy system have made it more stable, and it's work that absolutely had to be done. As far as our commitment to green energy—that we are leaders in terms of the North American continent and making sure that we have clean, renewable energy going forward, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of our record.

I have said clearly that there were mistakes that were made, and, contrary to what the leader of the third party is saying, I do believe that a better community process actually produces a better outcome. That's why we're putting one in place.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you sat at the cabinet table and signed the document which authorized your Liberal government to waste over \$1 billion of taxpayer money to cancel two power plants. Over the past eight months, you have stated that your government reacted out of respect for the local communities' opposition to these power plants. If you haven't noticed, 73 municipalities in Ontario have declared themselves unwilling hosts, but despite your promises, wind projects continue to be approved for communities that do not want them. Since when did a person's postal code determine whether they receive respect or contempt from your government?

1100

Premier, about 200 tractors—excuse me; I was out in the rain with these folks on the weekend. About 200 tractors, trucks and cars made their way down a 30-kilometre stretch of Highway 402 to get your attention. Premier, will you recognize that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite absolutely makes the point that I was making in response to the leader of the third party, which is that it is very important to have a good community process. The process that the Minister of Energy is putting in place, which identifies willing hosts and gives communities more input into the process upfront—that is exactly what needs to happen. I would suggest that the work we did on green energy has been very, very positive, and there is a lot to learn from the process that perhaps didn't take communities—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If it's a test, I'll pass it.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier. You know what they say: Those who can, do; those who can't, consult and have conversations. Enough is enough. Your government, with the support of the NDP, has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs because of your botched green energy policies, and you have the audacity to announce another rate hike as of November 1.

Last Friday, I have to tell you, Premier, my constituency assistant helped a family of seven. Their electricity had been cut off because they could not afford to pay their hydro bill. The mother called my office frantic because she had five small children and we had the threat of snow this past weekend in my riding. Thankfully, on a Friday afternoon, we were able to arrange to get the hydro back on, but for how long?

Premier, where are you taking this province? Truthfully, I am dreading this winter in fear of all the people who cannot afford their hydro bills. Is this what you envisioned for Ontario when you took over this role? Are we to expect families not to receive the basic—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Mr. Paul Miller: Who deregulated hydro?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's not get wound up before I even get a chance to have her stand. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that we have rebuilt over 80% of our electricity system because—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That rebuild of 80% of the electricity system had to happen because when we came into office it was not reliable, it had been neglected and that work needed to be done. On top of that, our plan for green energy has eliminated dirty coal, it has created more than 31,000 jobs—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sarnia—Lambton is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: And it has generated \$24 billion in investments.

I absolutely take to heart—and I'm glad that the member opposite was able to work with her constituent to make sure that her constituent had power. But that power is available because we've reworked the energy system and we have capacity in order to provide that electricity.

ONTARIO LOTTERY AND GAMING CORP.

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. This government dealt a death blow to the horse racing

industry under the pretext of OLG modernization. OLG modernization is simply a Liberal code for more casinos, but Ontarians have been very clear that they don't want casinos in their communities. Last week, the city of Vaughan voted to reject being a host site for a casino, and now the doors are quickly shutting to the possibility of a casino anywhere in the GTA.

Will the Premier listen to the communities and the people of Ontario and admit that OLG modernization is a giant, total, abysmal failure?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, and I appreciate the premise of the question, recognizing some of the concerns that exist going forward with regard to the transformation of the OLG and our gaming. We recognize how important it is to be socially responsible. We recognize also the great degree of dividend and support that the OLG provides for schools and hospitals and investments in our communities. We also appreciate and respect municipal decisions, and that's what we have done all along.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Back to the Premier: The Slots at Racetracks Program brought in \$1.1 billion a year in government revenue. By cancelling the SARP, this government has destroyed an entire industry in southern and rural Ontario for the profit of big casino conglomerates. But Ontarians don't want casinos in their communities; they want racetracks.

Isn't it time to admit you made a mistake? Reinstate the Slots at Racetracks Program until you figure out a fair and transparent plan for horse racing and casinos in Ontario.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Agriculture and Food.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, Mr. Speaker, the plan that we have put in place is an accountable and transparent plan. We owe a lot to former members John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson. They have worked with the industry to put in place a plan that will allow for a sustainable industry.

The SARP was neither transparent, nor was it accountable, so it would be irresponsible for us to move back there. But what we want is a sustainable industry across the province. All of the tracks in the province, whether they're part of the core or whether they're part of the grassroots, will have an opportunity to present a business plan, work with OLG and have a sustainable future. That was our goal, and that's what we have put in place.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Speaker, the Friday before Thanksgiving, I had the opportunity to join Mayor Watson, members of council and a number of colleagues from Queen's Park at an event to mark the start of boring the tunnel for Ottawa's light rail project. It was truly an exciting day for Ottawa.

Mr. Speaker, even with this exciting news in Ottawa, there is a lot of interest in the transit debate that's happening here in Toronto. In fact, many Ontarians want to know how the government is helping to build the future of transportation infrastructure in the province's largest city.

Having said that, residents of Ottawa South want to know how this government is going to help Ottawa move forward. Recently, Mayor Watson called for a massive transit plan to get cars off the street and citizens to the places they need to be in an efficient manner. To the minister: What have we done to get Ottawa moving?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We are investing, and have invested since we've come to government, \$1.8 billion in the city of Ottawa. I believe that is an unprecedented investment in that community, Mr. Speaker, and I think that's due to the very hard work of a number of Liberal MPPs from that constituency who are delivering for the community.

The Confederation Line, which the member from Ottawa South has been a big champion of, is moving forward. It's a very significant contribution. It is part of over \$1 billion of investment in rapid transit alone, and \$600 million just to the bus rapid transit system.

Mr. Speaker, we often get asked what the jobs policy is. This investment is creating 20,000 person-years of work in Ottawa and creating the foundation for major private sector job creation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: It's very good news to hear that transportation funding is a priority and that projects are under way in Ottawa. Residents of Ottawa South will be glad to know that this government is helping municipalities like Ottawa to build the transit we need. There are many small to mid-sized cities that need a steady flow of funding to finance transit infrastructure. I know that we are committed to assisting all regions and all cities to get every single Ontarian to work and home as fast as possible.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to my constituents and to all Ontarians in small to mid-sized cities to know that they can count on funding to support their demands for their public transportation system. Can the minister tell us what we're going to do as a government to ensure that there is steady funding to help municipalities outside the GTHA?

1110

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, if you understand the importance of infrastructure, you just have to look out the windows of the Legislature. The biggest commercial boom in construction is going on in the history of this city. It is estimated that half of all the construction cranes in North America are at work right now in the GTHA alone. That is a remarkable record.

It extends beyond Toronto, and I mentioned the huge investments in Ottawa. A small community like Ignace in northwestern Ontario has clean water because this government rebuilt its water treatment plant. In a community as small as Burpee Mills township, there are \$178,000

going to build a critical road in that community that will help revitalize that community. In Cobalt, almost \$2 million is being invested right now in basic road infrastructure, Mr. Speaker. We are building jobs and opportunities across Ontario.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is for the Premier. As you know, Premier, my Bill 74 takes a firm stand in support of Ontario workers and in support of an Ontario company. Premier, on September 9, you spoke in support, saying, "It's about a level playing field, and it's a very good example of the kind of thing where we find agreement"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General.

Mr. Monte McNaughton:—"and we should be able to move forward." Premier, you were all-in. But on October 2, you stated, "I will not be supporting it, assuming that the decision is not appealed. So that's the decision."

Premier, you have both flipped and flopped. But the time for clarity is now, and thousands of workers at EllisDon are eager for your word. With the decision being officially appealed, Premier, will you resume your support of my important bill, or will you renege on your word in favour of foreign corporations over Ontario workers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the member opposite knows, the Divisional Court has made a ruling that quashed the decision of the OLRB, Mr. Speaker, so the company can continue to operate as it did prior to the OLRB case. From my perspective, and I have said this because circumstances have changed, the urgency that was created by that labour board decision has been removed by the Divisional Court decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, Premier, just to reiterate your quote, you said, "I will not be supporting it, assuming that the decision is not appealed." That was your word, Premier.

Your lack of leadership and lack of decisiveness have risked an Ontario success story and thousands of Ontario construction jobs. My Bill 74 will maintain the status quo for EllisDon and will settle this issue once and for all. Premier, you stated that you would not be supporting my bill—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order—second time.

Mr. Monte McNaughton:—assuming it was not appealed. However, despite the appeal, you have chosen to stand with foreign construction companies instead of Ontario workers. Based on your past statements, it is obvious that your government expects the Divisional Court ruling to hold. Premier, when did you tell the sheet metal workers and the electrical workers that you expect their appeal to fail, and why do you refuse to stand up for

EllisDon and their thousands of employees all across Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows full well that there has been no appeal granted at this point. There's a leave to appeal before the court. I believe that the circumstances have changed. The Divisional Court has quashed the ruling by the OLRB, Mr. Speaker. Because of that, I believe that the urgency that was in place because of that OLRB decision is no longer in place.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier. Speaker, last spring, well-connected insiders hired by EllisDon had legislation crafted so they could escape a contract that they had with their employees. The Conservatives proposed it but the Liberals enthusiastically supported it, and the Premier agreed to speed it through this very House. Now she's scrambling to distance herself from the very bill that she championed.

Can the Premier tell us what today's position is on the EllisDon bill?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I just answered this question, Mr. Speaker, but I'm now going to answer it again. As the member opposite knows, the Divisional Court quashed the ruling of the labour relations board. The fact that the company can now continue to operate as it did before the OLRB ruling, I believe, changed the circumstances. We believe that the bill is no longer needed and that the urgency that was in place because of the OLRB decision is no longer there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Premier's position on this has more loops and turns than a roller coaster. What's more and more clear is that the Premier will say and do anything to help the Liberal Party.

First she championed the bill, passed it unanimously and put it on the fast track. Then she tried to convince the unions to abandon their right to appeal. Then, when they called her bluff, she zigzagged again, and now she claims she's going to oppose it. What assurances do people have that the Premier won't flip-flop yet again when the lobbyists from EllisDon come knocking?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have always believed that if one takes a position under a certain set of circumstances and then those circumstances change, the intelligent response is to reassess the position. If the circumstances don't change, then you don't need to reassess the position.

The circumstances changed. The urgency that was in place is no longer in place, and so I believe that the piece of legislation is no longer required.

IMMIGRANTS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. The Ontario provincial nominee program, known as the PNP, is a valuable immi-

grant selection program that allows Ontario to nominate economic immigrants for permanent residency.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, that will do.

Mr. John Yakabuski: "Circumstances change." No, really. "Circumstances change."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Really, that will do. If I have to get louder just because the member refuses to hear what I'm asking, then I will get specific. I've asked him to refrain.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A jellyfish response.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is the member from Renfrew choosing to ignore me?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good. Please finish.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I just recently learned that the federal government has capped Ontario's yearly nomination at only 1,300 nominees. I was also surprised to learn that no new PNP applications have been accepted since August.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is our government ensuring that we select the best and brightest economic immigrants to fill the skilled labour gaps that exist in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Coteau: The member is correct. The federal government has capped our provincial nominee program here in our province at 1,300. The federal government can do better. Ontario deserves more.

Ontario has little say from the federal government on economic immigrants who are selected to enter our province. Of the 99,000 people who immigrated to Ontario in 2012, we had a selection of less than 1.5%, and that's not great.

If you consider what's happening in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan: Last year the Alberta government had 11% selection, immigrant selection in Manitoba was 28% and in Saskatchewan, it was 34%.

Ontario's Immigration Strategy spells out the need for Ontario to have greater say in selecting skilled immigrants here in our province. By selecting highly skilled immigrants to fill positions in our labour force, Ontario will be able to grow its workforce to create more jobs in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Many Ontarians do not know that our province is not being given its fair share of PNP spaces. I understand that the minister has written to his federal counterpart to request additional PNP spots. Many employers and investors are looking to come to Ontario and will be glad that our government is advocating for more selections through the PNP program.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could you please address the misconception that bringing in skilled immigrants to Ontario negatively contributes to our economy and to more unemployed Ontarians?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Brampton West for his great question.

Our government is committed to economic growth, and believes that an educated, skilled and diverse workforce in Ontario is one of our greatest strengths. A diverse economy in our province is good for Ontario and great for this country. It's about bringing the best and brightest here to our province.

Since 2010, Ontario has nominated more than 2,000 international PhD and master's students for permanent residency through our provincial nominee program; 25 Ontario hospitals and health centres have used this program to retain specialists, doctors and nurses to better provide health services here in our province; and half of Ontario's universities have used the program to retain world-class professors and deliver better education here in the province.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes that the time has come for Ontario to redefine its shared immigration relationship with Ottawa so we can best position this province for success.

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ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. This weekend and this month, we're celebrating Small Business Week in Ontario. Small businesses, the heart and soul of job creation, are struggling to make ends meet here in Premier Wynne's Ontario. You've already taxed hard-working tradespeople by slapping on a new 576% trades tax, courtesy of your Bay Street bureaucracy, the College of Trades.

Section 7, Minister, of the College of Trades act, allows your College of Trades to tax employers for membership. Will you stand in the House today and promise employers that they will never have to pay the trades tax by the College of Trades?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to respond to that question. In fact, we were very, very clear some time ago, when we waived that provision for employers, so that employers are not paying membership; I don't know why the member would want to confuse them today and almost make them believe that they are. Employers are currently exempt when it comes to membership for the College of Trades. We did that for a good reason.

I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, the College of Trades is up and running. They have indeed reduced ratios for apprenticeships more than every government in this Legislature on all sides of the House combined over the last 20 years. So they've made some great progress to date. We're confident that they'll continue to do that, and we're very confident that they'll continue to listen very carefully to the business community as they carry on their responsibilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you, Minister. You waived it for one year, 2013. We don't know what's happening after that.

Only in Premier Wynne's Ontario would slapping a new trades tax on employers be the best way to celebrate Small Business Week.

Meridian Credit Union, Ontario's largest credit union, recently conducted a small business survey with Harris/Decima. The survey found that 75% of Ontario small businesses in Premier Wynne's Ontario have no plans to hire people next year. Your trades tax for employers will further punish these small businesses.

The difference is clear: The Ontario PCs, on this side of the House, stand up for small businesses on Ontario's Main Streets; the Liberals, on that side of the House, stand up for their multi-million dollar College of Trades bureaucracy on Bay Street.

Small Business Week is your golden opportunity, once and for all, to confirm that employers will never pay your trades tax. Minister, it's either Main Street or Bay Street. Will Main Street small businesses ever have to pay your Bay Street trades tax?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The rhetoric and fear mongering aside, we very deliberately did not proclaim section 7, and the member knows that. We have no intentions of doing so. We've been clear about that, we've indicated that, and I think that's important.

I suggest the member, from time to time—and I think he has already had an opportunity. He has been able to contact the new chair of the College of Trades, David Tsubouchi, an esteemed former colleague in this House, an esteemed former cabinet minister of his party. I'm very confident that Mr. Tsubouchi is going to do a fantastic job as our chair. I would hope that the member opposite would share that confidence in this fine gentleman, a former colleague of his, who we think is going to do a tremendous job for the trades in the province of Ontario.

We're very proud of how far the College of Trades has gone—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Brad Duguid: There's a lot more work to be done, and we think Mr. Tsubouchi is just the fellow to lead us there.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Last Tuesday, I was invited out to the horse races in Fort Erie. It was a bittersweet day for the community because in spite of the proud Niagara racing tradition, this Liberal government has decided that the Fort Erie Race Track doesn't deserve a 117th racing season. What does the Premier have to say to horse people, track workers and the community members about what her government plans to do to shut down horse racing at the Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me say, Mr. Speaker, categorically that that is not true. I have every confidence

that if Fort Erie Race Track wants to develop a business plan and work with the OLG, they can have a future, but it will be a different future than the present situation. That is the reality.

We have said all along that the horse racing industry needed to change, that the Slots at Racetracks Program was not accountable, was not sustainable.

Let me just read what some of the people who are in the horse racing industry have said about our plan. Mr. Ted Clarke from Grand River Raceway: "It's remarkably better than what our outlook was a year ago today. We essentially went from a place of having no relationship with government and no support to a place where we now have a spot to make a plan. This provides a new set of building blocks to move forward. We have been given some tools with which to work, and hopefully we can put them to good work."

The people in the industry see a way forward, and we are looking forward to working with them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, nobody in Fort Erie can understand why the Liberal government has decided that their community doesn't deserve a viable future in horse racing—not track CEO Jim Thibert or Fort Erie Mayor Doug Martin; not the jockeys or the concession stand workers; not the kitchen staff, the stable workers, maintenance, security, the mutual desk operators or the suppliers; not the horse owners, the fans or the bugler who calls out the post time—and not the veteran groomer of 36 seasons who pulled me aside and asked me to deliver a simple message to the Premier: Will the government see the light and save horse racing at the historic Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The panel who did an in-depth look at how we could put a sustainable plan in place noted that they urged the government to work with Fort Erie to develop an alternative and sustainable plan. There is nothing written in stone that says that Fort Erie doesn't have a future.

I understand the politics of what the leader of the third party is doing right now; I understand that. But it is not responsible of us to suggest that something that has not been accountable and has not been transparent, which was the Slots at Racetracks Program, should continue.

We have got a plan in place—and I have a copy of the plan here; I can send it over to the leader of the third party—because the plan that was in place, the program that was in place, was not sustainable. We've put a sustainable plan in place. We look forward to working with Fort Erie so that they can put a new plan in place.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the minister responsible for seniors affairs. Today there are nearly 200,000 Ontarians who have a form of dementia. In my recent visit at Mon Sheong long-term-care facility, both the caregivers and the families expressed concern about dementia.

As the minister is well aware, statistics show that three out of five people with dementia will go missing at some point in time. Sadly, statistics also show that 50% of those who go missing for 24 hours have a serious risk of death or injury from exposure, hypothermia or drowning.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain to the Legislature what the government is doing to address this growing concern?

Hon. Mario Sergio: My thanks to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt for her very deep understanding and compassion with respect to this very serious issue.

In March of this year, in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario, we launched a groundbreaking multicultural safety awareness program named Finding Your Way, a wandering prevention program aimed at people with dementia who may go wandering and go missing. As part of this program, the Alzheimer Society will distribute kits that include tips and resources to families and caregivers for preventing wandering incidents and acting quickly in cases of missing seniors.

Our government is very committed to providing funding for the Ontario Police College to develop and deliver training that incorporates wandering prevention into the police curriculum for quick, better and effective response.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to thank the minister for his response. I know that my constituents in Scarborough—Agincourt and across Ontario are pleased to hear that the government is taking action, increasing the safety of Ontarians with dementia.

During many meetings with constituents, I often hear about initiatives such as the one the minister talked about, the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program. However, many family members and caregivers are unaware of what exactly is in the Finding Your Way kits to assist in preventing wandering or enhance community response when a senior goes missing.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please elaborate on the contents of the wandering prevention kits?

Hon. Mario Sergio: The safety kit will help families and caregivers establish a plan to ensure the safety, independence and dignity of an individual.

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The kits, by the way, are available in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi, and they include:

- a personal ID page that can be shared with police in an emergency;
- instructions on what to do when a person with dementia goes missing;
- the latest information on locating devices;
- instructions on how to safety-proof your home and immediate environment to prevent a person with dementia from going missing;
- as well, a list of important tips on what to do when reunited after a missing incident.

Speaker, Ontarians can contact the Alzheimer Society—one of the 38 societies across our province—through

Ontario 211 to obtain a kit. As well, it's available by downloading it.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question to the Premier is around jobs and the economy. Premier, as you know, the Fort Erie Race Track is 116 years old. It survived two world wars. It survived the Great Depression, but it's not going to survive the McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government.

I look at everything for what it will do to create jobs, to grow our economy. You seem to want to close down the tracks and toss people out of work. Let me be absolutely clear about this: I fought for that track. I fought to keep it open. We gave it a 10-year lease on life, and I plan to do it again. I hope that we're on the same page on this, but let me test that out. Folks in Fort Erie reject this notion of a festival meet, the notion of a small-town rural fair where you drive the ponies in, you drive them out and you lose the jobs. That's not good enough for me. It's not good enough for the industry. It is not good enough for the people of Niagara. Will you commit to a full racing season next year to give some life to this community and give them back their jobs?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The starting point for this discussion is that the Slots at Racetracks Program was not sustainable; it was not accountable. It was not going to be sustainable over the long term.

The fact is that we have a plan. It's a five-year plan. It's a plan that was put together by people who spent a lot of time with the industry. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition: Fort Erie should have a future. The festival plan was one option that was put forward. What I have said is that Fort Erie needs to work with OLG to come up with an alternative business plan.

But to pretend that somehow what was in place was accountable and sustainable over the long term is just not the case. Don Drummond said that. We needed to put a new plan in place, and we've got a new plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now, hold on a second. That's where I was born and raised. We all have fond memories of the track. We believe in a future for it. Premier, it was you who took the slots out of the track. It was you who ripped them out. It was you who tossed them out of work. I think all of us are tired of the NDP piping up on this issue because, quite frankly, they propped you up. They signed the deal and [*inaudible*] their own paycheques. Half the job losses are on your back and half the job losses—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I'll wait. Thank you.

Please finish.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I fought for the track. I kept it open. I'm proud of that and would do it again. We've got a plan to do it. I've appointed Randy Pettapiece as our lead on this issue. He's got a plan.

This is a track, according to your own Sadinsky report, with the second-highest wagering in Ontario. It had 78 full race dates this past year. Your plan is to put them on the road to closure.

Let me ask you this: You're the Minister of Agriculture as well as the Premier. Will you agree to sit down with Randy Pettapiece and I to actually give life to that track, move it forward and ensure our sustainability—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have fought to get horse racing on a sustainable footing, Mr. Speaker. I have made it clear to the OLG that it will be integrated into the overall gaming strategy, and that is what will put it on a sustainable footing.

I know that the member for Perth-Wellington was at Grand River when we made the announcement. He knows that the horse racing industry is on a more sustainable footing than it was a year ago—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The chippy comments that come in almost like drive-by heckling are not helpful when I'm trying to get control. But also, I know your voices by now, and I know who to come to. So I'm asking that it stop. And member from Nepean-Carleton, please don't shout the Premier down. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On the subject of festival meets, I would just remind the Leader of the Opposition that the Kentucky Derby is a festival meet.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Last week my constituent Wes Bland was in the news across Ontario because of the roadblocks he faced in accessing a doctor-ordered PET scan. Mr. Bland was forced to make the long six-hour drive to Thunder Bay instead of a much shorter trip to Winnipeg. My office has been in regular touch with the minister's office since September, alerting her to the urgency of Mr. Bland's case and the problems he was experiencing accessing cancer care.

Can the minister please explain why her office didn't take steps to ensure that Mr. Bland could access the care

he needed quickly and close to home despite the minister's knowledge that he was being denied this care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for the question. I must say, I'm a bit surprised at this question because she and I had a very good conversation, I thought, last week about what had happened and why this particular patient was unfortunately directed to the wrong place for the scan that he needed. Unfortunately, the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority sent out information to physicians in Manitoba that was not accurate. We've identified the problem, and we have corrected that problem.

I am absolutely committed, as I told the member last week, that everyone in this province get access to excellent care. If they live in northwestern Ontario, and that care is available in Manitoba, then we cover that care. So if they're entitled to the care here in Ontario, they will get it in Manitoba. We've taken the appropriate steps to ensure this does not happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: First of all, I need to say I appreciate that the minister did take some time and talk to me about this issue. But the problem is that, despite the minister's assurances that the problem is "fixed" or, as she just said, "corrected," Manitoba Health continues to insist that Ontario patients will still have to seek prior approval for out-of-province procedures such as PET scans, as stated in their memo. The minister has said that she has fixed the problem, but has she really fixed the problem when people will continue to wait weeks for approval for out-of-province PET scans or when they're actually forced to go to the Toronto Star so that care is provided in a timely and close-to-home manner?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do my best to do my job in the province of Ontario. To the best I know, my responsibility does not extend to the province of Manitoba. They have set up this rule in Manitoba. It is their rule, not our rule.

I am committed, as I told the member last week, to do what needs to be done at a ministry-to-ministry level to smooth that system for the patients of northeastern Ontario—

Interjection.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —northwestern Ontario. As I said earlier, they deserve to get the care that someone in Ontario is entitled to, and if Manitoba is closer, that's where they get it. So we'll continue to work with the government of Manitoba and the authorities there to make sure that the people in northwestern Ontario get the care they need.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario's capacity to compete in the global knowledge-based economy depends on our ability to harness our research strengths, encourage innovation and provide support to entrepreneurs. Local business leaders I've met with in Scarborough tell me

that Ontario needs to remain a leader in entrepreneurship to keep our economy strong, and this will create jobs for tomorrow.

Given the challenges in the global economy, it is more important than ever that we take action that helps turn great ideas into thriving companies and new jobs. Can the minister tell us what action the government is taking to ensure that entrepreneurs are getting the support they need and that programs are easily accessible to them?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to thank the member from Scarborough—Rouge River for that important question.

Entrepreneurship and innovation are at the heart of our government's jobs and economy strategy. One of our initiatives is the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs, made up of three networks. The first is our 57 small business enterprise centres that are located in municipalities and help small businesses at the local level. The second one is our network of regional innovation centres, which serve to coordinate the work of all actors at the regional level. The third and last one is the business advisory service, which provides consultation and mentorship to grow businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our government's investments, which support entrepreneurs and innovators across our province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound on a point of order.

Mr. Bill Walker: Just a reminder that the Ontario Dental Association will be hosting a sports mouthguard fitting clinic in room 340 from 12 to 5 today. It's open to all MPPs and staff.

A further reminder that the Legiskaters play their first game of the season this Thursday at 5 p.m. against the firefighters at the Ricoh Coliseum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron—Bruce on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome Amanda Garofalo to the assembly. She is an intern with the Ontario legislative intern program. It's great to have her working in Huron—Bruce.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Then I'll do my reminder: Don't forget the wine tasting is this evening at 5 o'clock. You can't forget that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: In the west members' gallery is a guest from Lambton county, from Sarnia—Lambton, Warden Todd Case. Accompanying him are the CAO of Lambton county, Ron Van Horne, and the county treasurer, John Innes; and also another special guest, Myles Vanni, executive director of the Inn of the Good Shepherd. I'd like to ask everyone to give them a warm welcome to the Legislature today.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to introduce Mr. Douglas Wong, who is an intern in my office. He just started last week, and he's doing a terrific job.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm privileged to welcome former MPP John Cleary's wife and family, who are in the east gallery: Elizabeth and their four children, Sharon, Donna, Debbie and John.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. When I was first elected, he was my seatmate; I sat right beside him.

Further introductions?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Again, I'd like to welcome my assistant from Cornwall, who is up today, Marilyn McMahon, and her sister, who is here—it just escapes me. Thank you. Della.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll put it on record. Della; right? Thank you.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BUTTER TART CONTEST

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: This past weekend I had the honour of being one three judges. I was joined by Mr. Rick Norlock, MP for Northumberland—Quinte West, and Mrs. Carol Darling, who is an expert judge and baker herself. I can attribute a few pounds that I'm carrying today to Mrs. Darling.

We were at the first annual amateur butter tart contest, held at the Legion in the beautiful village of Hastings. It was a very tasty event that showcased some of the finest butter tarts, not only in Northumberland—Quinte West but in the province as a whole. As my seatmate, Mr. Pettapiece, pointed out, it is his riding of Perth—Wellington that began the Butter Tart Trail, so I would like to acknowledge that. I'm hoping that Hastings can become a part of this wonderful tour.

I would also like to congratulate Mrs. Jacqueline Beamish, who was my grade 3 teacher, for taking home not only first prize in the contest but also the people's choice award. I would also like to thank Skye Morrison, Greg Evans and all the volunteers who made the first annual butter tart contest a great success. I know, from the turnout and the quality of the wares, that the second annual butter tart contest will be an even greater success, and I would encourage all the members to come to Hastings next year and enjoy the butter tarts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My glucose count went up just listening to it.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Vanthof: The Local Food Act may soon be passed into law, but the reality is, because of the way the Premier structured the bill, it will not be known for years if it will have any impact whatsoever on Ontarians' access to local food. The same cannot be said about the

draft CETA agreement signed by the federal government and the European Union. Although the agreement has the potential to create winners in the economy, some of the losers are already clear: local food, especially fine cheese.

The agreement will allow the amount of cheese imported into this country from Europe to double. Ontario dairy farmers who supply the milk to make Canadian cheese are obvious losers.

While this agreement does set a troubling precedent for supply management and the marketing regime under which dairy farmers operate, that same system is uniquely equipped to cushion the blow for individual farms. Dairy farmers pool their costs and their incomes. If markets decline by 2% because of CETA, every dairy farmer will take a 2% production and corresponding income cut—a serious blow, but not a knockout punch.

The future for some small Ontario cheese makers is not as certain. Since increased imports will be targeted to specific markets, Ontario cheese makers who supply these markets will not be able to compete against subsidized European cheese and may be forced out of business. There is no pooling mechanism for the cheese maker. Ontario could lose access to some of the local cheeses that they have come to love.

Will the Premier and Minister of Agriculture commit to stand up for dairy farmers and cheese makers to ensure that great cheese continues to be made in Ontario? They need more than goals, targets and talk.

JEAN AUGUSTINE GIRLS' LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise today to speak about the pleasure of opening and renaming a school in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, the Jean Augustine Girls' Leadership Academy. This school is for girls in grades four to seven and includes academic and extra-curricular choices that encourage girls to be tomorrow's leaders. The girls at the Jean Augustine Girls' Leadership Academy receive mentorship and become advocates in both local and international issues. I've been involved with the Jean Augustine Girls' Leadership Academy from the very beginning, and I'm very proud of the teachers, staff and students who have made this program a success.

I also wanted to pay special tribute to Jean Augustine, for whom this school was renamed. The Honourable Jean Augustine was an elementary school principal. As many of you know, this former member of federal Parliament for Etobicoke—Lakeshore was also the minister of state for multiculturalism and the status of women from 2002 to 2004. She was also the first African Canadian elected to Parliament. She is currently the Ontario Fairness Commissioner.

In 2009, Jean Augustine received the Order of Canada for her distinguished career as an educator, politician and advocate for social justice in Canada. Jean is an excellent, outstanding role model for girls in my riding of

Scarborough–Agincourt but, more importantly for the new school, the Jean Augustine Girls' Leadership Academy. I offer my congratulations to everyone involved in this new school.

ALICE MUNRO

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to join a number of my colleagues here in this House to recognize a treasure from Wingham. Just prior to our break for constituency week, a number of people stood up and congratulated Wingham's treasure, Alice Munro, who also has a residence in Clinton, Ontario. It's an absolute joy to hear that the success that she has realized around the world has culminated in being recognized by the Nobel Prize in Literature.

I want to share with you that locally, at home in Huron–Bruce, there are so many other ways that we celebrate Alice Munro. We have a literary garden right next to the museum in Wingham, Ontario. Growing up, going to high school in Wingham, we studied Alice Munro's works and how she interwove all of the local communities into her stories. That was a really good exercise unto itself, but I'd like to say, most importantly, that Alice Munro in her success is inspiring future writers in our community as well.

We now host an Alice Munro writing festival. I'd like to recognize the following people; on September 29, these winners were recognized. In the youth category, there was Julia DaSilva; Dana Mitchell came in second; Bronte Cronsberry came in first. Finn Hogue got an honourable mention, as well as Julia DaSilva. Aidan McKee came in third place. In our senior category, it was great to see a number of entries. Helen Rossiter received first place; Jennifer Hutchison, second; Isobel Raven, third; and an honourable mention went to both Marilyn Kleiber and Susan McCrae.

HENRY MERLING

Miss Monique Taylor: It's with a heavy heart but great pride that I rise today to speak of the passing of a giant in Hamilton politics. Henry Merling passed away this last Thursday at the age of 80. Henry was the ward 7 alderman in Hamilton from 1974 to 1997, but he continued to practise politics until his dying day. He was a force on council and he was a force as a citizen, always standing up for what he believed was right and in the best interests of ward 7 constituents and the city of Hamilton.

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He will be remembered as one of Hamilton's most influential politicians. He cared deeply for the people he represented. People recognized and respected him, and they knew they could always count on Henry.

Henry would visit my desk more or less daily in my former role as the assistant to current city councillor Scott Duvall. He knew the ward inside out and backwards. He knew the people, the developers, the go-getters, the go-to-ers and certainly the best sign locations.

Henry had a hand that could be described as a mitt. When Henry shook your hand, you knew it. He would give it a grip and giggle because he knew he still had it. I will miss his encouragement and him saying to me, "You're doing all right, kid."

Henry leaves behind his wife, Wendy, and his daughter, Katie, and was predeceased by his son, Joey.

Thank you, Henry Merling, for your 24 years-plus of service to the city of Hamilton. You will be greatly missed.

FIONA COWLES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It is my privilege to stand in the House today to honour Mr. Fiona Cowles, a tireless volunteer from King township in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, who passed away earlier this month.

It is always a pleasure to meet someone with a strong sense of civic responsibility and community spirit. Fiona Cowles was one of these people, and her passing has left those of us who knew her with a strong desire to pay tribute to this remarkable and selfless woman.

Originally from England, Mrs. Cowles moved to King township in 1973 and was involved in many organizations: the Concerned Citizens of King Township, the Oak Ridges Trail Association and the King Township Historical Society, to name a few. Over the years, she served as a passionate advocate for both her community and the environmental issues that she held so dear to her heart.

Earlier this year, Mrs. Cowles was recognized as King township's Citizen of the Year, acknowledging Fiona's generous spirit and the many years that she gave as an employee, a volunteer and a community activist.

Fiona Cowles will be sorely missed. Her passing is a great loss for her family, her friends and her community, and to all of us she is a wonderful example of a life well lived in the spirit of generosity.

CITY OF BURLINGTON

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Last Wednesday, Burlington celebrated the beginning of the 10th anniversary of the signing of its twinning agreement with the city of Apeldoorn, Netherlands, a relationship dating back to that country's liberation in 1945. Ten years ago, Burlington and Apeldoorn signed a memorandum of understanding that would officially twin the cities on the 60th anniversary of the liberation.

Last week, a Dutch delegation including Apeldoorn Mayor John Berends, Dutch Consul General Mr. Anne van Leeuwen and Dutch high school students joined a group of Burlington dignitaries—among them, Burlington mayor Rick Goldring, ward 6 councillor Blair Lancaster, former Burlington mayor Rob MacIsaac, and Burlington's committee chair for Apeldoorn, Arnold Koopman—in beautiful Spencer Smith Park.

They gathered at a granite bench, designed by Dutch artist Gerard van den Berg, that was a gift from the

people of the Netherlands to celebrate this agreement. The group renewed that bond with a symbolic groundbreaking at Apeldoorn Park, formerly Elgin Park.

The city of Burlington hosts an annual celebration of Canada-Netherlands Friendship Day every May, marking the anniversary of the liberation of the Netherlands by Canadian Armed Forces.

Happily, Burlington's twinning with Apeldoorn is a friendship that knows no season or end.

SENIORS' AWARDS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The Ontario Senior Achievement Award honours people who have made an outstanding contribution to their community after the age of 65. This can include voluntary or professional activities in the arts, community service, voluntarism, education and fitness. This morning, I attended a special ceremony at the Lieutenant Governor's suite where the Honourable David C. Onley and the Honourable Mario Sergio, minister responsible for seniors, presented the awards.

I was proud to witness one of my York Centre constituents, Sam Simchovitch, presented with the province's highest recognition for seniors. Sam Simchovitch is a Holocaust survivor who has used his life to showcase his love of languages, translating works of poetry from Yiddish to English. A retired teacher and curator at the Beth Tzedec synagogue museum, he volunteers using his talent for translation to work on exhibitions.

He moved to Canada with his family in 1949 and writes about his experiences. He has had 18 pieces of his writings published, including seven books of poems.

Honouring seniors for their ongoing work and dedication to their communities is part of the Wynne government's commitment to ensuring that seniors in Ontario are properly cared for and have access to services and support that improve their quality of life.

NEIL ORFORD

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise and congratulate one of Dufferin-Caledon's finest educators, Neil Orford, on receiving the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching. In 2012, Neil was a recipient of the Ontario Premier's Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Neil is an amazing role model not only for his students but also for his community. His innovative approach to teaching history has struck a passion within many students and has led to impressive results, as evidenced by Centre Dufferin District High School taking top position in national history tests.

Initiatives like Mr. Orford's efforts to take students on interactive tours of battlefields in Europe are an example of the enthusiasm he brings teaching history. On these trips, students are asked to compile biographies on soldiers with roots from our local community involved in the battles, and these biographies are then given as additions to the Dufferin County Museum and Archives

online database—the first in Canada, actually. What an amazing initiative, and one that is so rewarding for Centre Dufferin students. Clearly, the impressive honour of receiving the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching is well deserved.

Mr. Orford has a reputation for inspiring his students to be interested in history, and it shows when you hear the amazing testimonials of his past and present students. I'd like to commend Neil on his incredible dedication and energy and all the amazing work he has done teaching students about the importance of history.

Dufferin-Caledon is proud to have such an amazing teacher like Mr. Orford call our community home. Congratulations, Neil. You deserve it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce a new staff person starting in my office today—he's here in the Legislature—Trent Angiers. Welcome, Trent. Good luck over the next several years.

JOHN CLEARY

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I believe that you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. John Cleary, the former member for Cornwall and Stormont-Dundas-Charlottenburgh riding from 1987 to 2003, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General is seeking unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent to do the tribute? Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: On October 6, 2012, Ontario lost an advocate for rural issues, and the people of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry lost a humble man and a great friend who worked tirelessly on their behalf. This humble man I speak of is former MPP John Cleary.

John was a big man in stature, but I'd like to tell this House that John Cleary was indeed a modest man, one with a heart of gold, and a real gentleman.

John was born in Northfield Station, now known as Lunenburg, Ontario, the son of Neil and Wilhelmina Cleary on August 31, 1932. He resided there, continuing to farm, until his death just last year. John loved rural life and its qualities, including the appreciation of family values that it instills.

John met the love of his life, Elizabeth, when they were just 12 years old, marrying her eight years later in 1952. Just last year, on June 21, 2012, they celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary. John and Elizabeth have four children: Sharon, Donna, Debbie and John. They are all here today in the gallery. The family has grown to include five grandchildren: Natalie, Chantal, John, Kristina and Alexander; and four great-grandchildren:

Nicholas, Isabelle, Kayden and Grayson. John and Elizabeth's legacy will continue to grow on. His family is here today, and I'd like to reiterate again just how our hearts are with you.

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John was trained as a millwright, and worked for Domtar Fine Papers until he was elected MPP in 1987. In addition to the full-time job at Domtar, he successfully ran a beef farm operation. His children talk of working with him on the farm, putting in long days in the field baling hay, feeding cows and all the other chores that make up a farmer's daily schedule. Anyone who has worked on a beef or dairy farm knows all too well what it's like to work in a mow at 100-plus degrees.

John was a big volunteer in his local community. In 1972, his friend Tom Maloney approached him to run for councillor on Cornwall township municipal council. After much hesitation John finally agreed, and that was the start of a very successful 31 years of holding political office, first as a councillor, then deputy reeve and reeve of South Stormont, and in 1983, warden of the great and historic counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry.

An interesting story about his start in politics and his reluctance to run for the township council: His wife, Elizabeth, is rumored to have suggested that John just tell Tom Maloney to buzz off. Elizabeth must have been very much like my mother, who said a similar thing when somebody talked my father into running in Lancaster township around the same time. In fact, my dad and mom were very good friends with Elizabeth and John, always enjoying each other's company at various county functions, events and conferences.

Then, in 1987, John threw his hat in the ring at the provincial level and served four terms as the local MPP until 2003. This is when I got to know John as the township councillor. We often met with him at his home and at Queen's Park to resolve issues at the township and county level. John was always very approachable and understanding of the issues affecting rural Ontario. In fact, I visited John and Elizabeth just after my election to Queen's Park, and he gave me what I believe to be some very good advice as a newly elected MPP: It was not to forget why I was here and not to forget the people who had elected me, the people of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry.

John Cleary set a high standard of public service in Cornwall and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. With a track record like John's, it was clear that they could never say enough about how respected he was by the residents of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. John's success was underpinned by his wife, Elizabeth's, and his family's 100% support and by all of his continued efforts to be a caring, honest politician who listened to constituents and followed up on their concerns to make their lives better.

John believed in family, fairness and doing a good, honest day's work. He believed that if you work hard and treat people right, not only will you reap the benefits but so will everyone else around you. John also never forgot the residents of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry who

elected him to be their voice at Queen's Park. They were always in his heart, and he never forgot why he was here and who sent him here. He was here to do his very best for the people. He said many times that his job was to do what the people wanted or needed him to do, and to do right by them.

I'm honoured to have known John Cleary, and I understand why my dad, Bernie, enjoyed his time working behind him. To Elizabeth's and John's family members, my heart and the hearts of the people of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry are with you. Please know that John Cleary will always be remembered with fondness and love. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes? The member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When I arrived here in 2001 as a rookie, this was an intimidating place. I got to meet all the MPPs of that day slowly but surely. One of the last ones I got to meet, actually, was John Cleary. The reason was because he was a quiet and gentle guy. He sat there and didn't say much, but he was always very genuine. When I did get to meet him, I have to say that I admired him very much for his 30 years of public service but also for the way he acted and controlled himself and acted in this Legislature. You would never hear cross words or yelling out, and when he stood up to say something, he meant it from his heart. I think all of us in this place could learn a great lesson from him.

He was a quiet and unassuming man, but he was, most of all, and what you understood almost immediately, beloved by his constituents. He was hard-working and he was constituency-oriented. When we had brief conversations, he would talk about going back to his constituency for the weekend and the many events he would attend and people he would speak with.

He was hugely successful, Mr. Speaker, in his dealings with the people of Cornwall and the area around Cornwall. He was very successful, and you know that. Not only was he elected for 31 years in a row, but he was elected to this place under very trying and difficult circumstances. In 1987, of course, he was first elected in a Liberal wave. Politicians of all stripes in this place come in in great numbers when their party is in ascendance. What he did after that is the true mark of genius of the man. In 1990, when the orange wave swept Ontario, he survived and, actually, his numbers went up. In 1995, when a Conservative wave swept Ontario, he survived, and his numbers went up. In 1999, when redistribution affected all of the ridings of Ontario and he lost his riding—or at least a part of it—he had to go head to head with a very famous Conservative by the name of Noble Villeneuve, and he beat him. So you can see that a politician who was beloved by his constituents and did his constituency work got elected not only in a wave but survived three things that would have probably done in most other politicians.

He always, in this place, stood up for his riding. Whenever he spoke or said anything, it was about his

riding and the people who lived in his riding and the influence that he had on them and that they, in turn, had on him.

He always did what he thought was right. He would take on the government of the day, who, when I was first here, was the Conservative government. But he didn't think twice if he thought his own party was doing the wrong thing—speaking against them, too. I remember, on one occasion, he was said to have spoken against his own leader when the Liberals were saying what John thought were unfair things about then-Premier Mike Harris.

I want to talk about his family, who are here today. The family obviously has had to make a great many sacrifices over the years. To his wife, Elizabeth; his children, Sharon, Donna, Deborah and John; and I understand friends are here today, Marilyn McMahon and Tom Ayerst: They are here not only because they love John, but they are here in tribute to what their family meant, I'm sure, to all of them. The weeks that John would be away; the travel home on Thursday or Friday, to get all the way there and then turn around on Sunday and come all the way back; the missed family events that I'm sure occurred—we are grateful in this House to his legacy of honesty. We are grateful in this House to his legacy of integrity. He is an example of a steady, quiet-reflection kind of guy. He was an example to all of the members of all parties of how we should behave in this place.

On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the NDP, we would like to thank John and his family—the Cleary family—for the commitments that were made to public service, but, most importantly, we want to thank them for the integrity that John brought to this job.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tributes?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm honoured to represent the government caucus as we pay tribute to John Cleary, one of the most successful politicians in the history of Cornwall and Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry counties.

Once again, in the members' gallery, we have his wife, Elizabeth, and his children, Sharon, Donna, Deborah and John. I would invite all the members to the government House leader's office after the tribute here today for a reception, so you get an opportunity to meet the family members at that point in time.

As has already been stated, he was elected and re-elected, provincially and locally, for 31 years. As a matter of fact, the first time he got elected was in 1972, which, coincidentally, was also my first election.

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From the Cornwall Standard Freeholder, in an interview that he gave in 2009, he said the following: "What was the most exciting electoral victory for you?" I think all of us can relate to that. It's always the first one: The first time you put your name forward and get elected. This is what he said—and it sort of coincides with what was said earlier. This is him talking to the Cornwall Standard Freeholder: "Going back to day one, I had been appointed to a tribunal for drainage and fences by the

municipality. We had to settle disputes. Some got the idea I was doing a half-decent job, and they got the idea I should run for council. My wife Elizabeth wasn't happy—four kids, farm, working at the paper mill, and sometimes having upwards of 70-80 head of cattle" to deal with. "My dad came to talk to her," and he said to her, "Don't worry! Him running against that bunch in there a long time! You don't have to worry!" He won't win. On election night, he led the polls. That was John Cleary in every way, Speaker.

As has already been mentioned, he was warden of the county at one point in time. He was reeve of Cornwall township council. He was elected here in 1990, 1995, 1999, and up until his retirement in 2003. As a matter of fact, he was first elected in 1987. His last election was an interesting one—Mr. Prue has already mentioned that today—in that he ran against a formidable candidate, the Minister of Agriculture at the time, Noble Villeneuve, also a well-known name in that particular part of eastern Ontario. Even though the Conservatives won in a landslide, he won quite handily.

As a matter of fact, the very first person that I ever spoke to after my election in elected office was John Cleary. You may recall that in 1995 there was this great expectation that the Liberals were going to form government. That's why many of us ran at that point in time, to be quite honest about it. When that didn't happen, quite frankly I didn't hear from anybody here for at least a week or so. I think everybody was just too darned tired out or they were just too disappointed in not being elected into government.

I remember phoning the whip's office, and John's office used to be right next to the opposition whip's office on the third floor of this building. I talked to the whip and I said, "Are there any members around?" She said, "Oh, yes. John Cleary is right next door. I'll get him for you." I talked to John, and I said, "John, I'm John Gerretsen. I'm from Kingston." He said, "Oh, yes. I've heard of you. You're the city slicker from Kingston; that's right." But we're all from eastern Ontario, as Steve Clark would well understand. I said, "When are you going to have a meeting?" He said, "I don't know, but one of these days I'm sure we'll have a meeting, and I guess, with everything that's going on today, we'll just have to make the most of it."

He was one of those individuals that was truly a local politician in every sense of the word, because the other thing he said—and I think many of us that have served in public life, both provincially and locally, can attest to this. When he was asked what he would rather do, be a municipal politician or in provincial politics—most of us don't want to say this when we're here in provincial politics. He said that municipal is by far the best. It is very close to the people. If you were a reeve or a mayor now, if you wanted to do something, you got it done, and it doesn't always work that way at Queen's Park all that quickly.

I'll just leave that at that. I can totally identify with that. Certainly it shows you what kind of a gentleman John was in every respect.

There's always a reason for success. Sometimes it's a little bit of luck and good fortune, but I think the most important thing is that he remembered that all politics, at the end of the day, is local. You can get so absorbed in this place with so many different issues, but if you forget your local constituency, the people that sent you here, you're just not going to succeed, and John succeeded in every which way.

As a matter of fact, some of the accomplishments that he had provincially: There was a private member's bill passed—and John wasn't necessarily known for putting bills forward on a daily basis like some of us do in this House. But one of his private members' bills is still protecting consumers and businesses today, 17 years later. On behalf of the Ontario Plumbing Inspectors Association, he put in private member's Bill 67, which was given royal assent on December 19, 1996. It provided for the professional designation of certified plumbing systems inspectors. It became a reality, and as a result, the consumers of this province are better protected.

There were also a number of local issues that he was quite involved and quite successful in. In the same interview that I quoted from before, he stated that he was very proud, for example, of being able to obtain drinking water for areas like St. Andrew's in his riding, and upon the completion of the Glen St. Dun Lodge. He was also very proud of the role that he played in the establishment of the Long Sault Arena. Those are the kinds of issues, particularly in the local riding, that people are going to remember you for, and John will certainly be remembered for all of that, Speaker.

Finally, let me just say this. When the former mayor of Cornwall, Brian Lynch, heard of John's passing a year or so ago, he stated the following: John "was a real gentleman, modest, hard-working, and dedicated to serving his constituents and to making their lives better...."

"John was so successful because he was a caring, honest politician who listened to his constituents and followed up on their concerns. He was much loved by those who knew and respected him. Elizabeth Cleary at John's side was a constant support in his political career."

Mention was made earlier about how much effort it takes for members outside of the GTA to be here. I know that John drove back and forth to Cornwall just about every week—well, every week that the House sat and many other weeks in between. A drive from Cornwall to here is about a four-and-a-half or five-hour drive, at a minimum. So that shows you the amount of determination that he had for those 16 years that he served here, to be here, to represent the people of his riding to the best of his ability.

His successor, Jim Brownell, who was here from 2003 until just the last election, stated of him as follows: "In politics, John was a true gentleman, always going about his work in a sincere and gentle manner. Underneath the gentleness, though, there was a spirit of determination and understanding of what was just and fair." I think that that is probably the thing that John will be remembered

for around this place more than anything else: He believed in being just and fair in all situations.

We say to his widow, Elizabeth, and to the four children who are here today, thank you for sharing John with us for the 16 years that he was able to serve the people of his riding to the best of his ability. He will be missed in this place. It's too bad that nowadays there aren't more John Clearys in this House, on all sides of the political fence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their kind and heartfelt comments about John and to the family.

If I may take a pause for a moment, on a personal note, as I said earlier, I was a seatmate of John's. A gentleman, yes; a gentle man, yes—but I have to tell you that there was an issue that he took with passion, which endeared him to me immensely, and that was about children, and I thank him for that, because he's the example of what I was in this House for. My memory of him will be forever here, and I thank you for it.

Further, we will have a DVD and Hansard copies made available to the family.

Again, finally, thank you for the gift of John Cleary.

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PETITIONS

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support the petition, will affix my name and send it with page Helen.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Enbridge Canada is proposing to reverse the flow of the Line 9 pipeline in order to transport western oil and tar sands oil through the most densely populated parts of Ontario;

"Whereas this pipeline project proposes changes to the pipeline that merit serious consideration, like the increase

in oil carrying capacity and the transport of significantly more corrosive oil through the pipeline;

"Whereas this pipeline passes under cities and major rivers and a spill would risk the drinking water and health of millions of Ontarians and cause permanent damage to ecosystems;

"Whereas Line 9's reversal will have impacts that must be analyzed beyond the National Energy Board hearings held by the federal government;

"Whereas the government of Quebec has already indicated its intention to conduct an independent review of the line reversal impact, including the flow of oil sands crude into Quebec;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario acts in the best interest of the health and environment of the province and conduct a full environmental assessment of Enbridge's proposed Line 9 reversal and capacity expansion projects."

I affix my signature to this petition and give this to Owen.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: An important issue in my riding, and a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;"—and other locations—

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine, specifically at Lakeridge Road and Morgans Road in Durham" and the Greenwood plan in my riding of Durham.

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to Louis, one of the pages.

DENTAL CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas thousands and thousands of adults live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the programs were designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly do all in its power to stop the dental fund being diverted to support other programs; and

"That the Legislative Assembly fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Benjamin to deliver.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

"Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

"Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of ... Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail."

I really agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the desk with Sophia.

SENIORS' DINING PROGRAM

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the seniors in my riding.

"Whereas the Seniors Seva Mandal developed the South Asian Congregate Dining Program to promote

well-being and encourage a healthy lifestyle for Hamilton seniors; and

"Whereas the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN provided funding for this program through the Victorian Order of Nurses (VON); and

"Whereas this program provides a necessary and vital service to about 160 seniors over three days per week with food costs being paid by participants; and

"Whereas the VON is required to be accountable and transparent to the LHIN; and

"Whereas the VON has not upheld their obligations under the memorandum of understanding to maintain open and honest communication, or to meet on a regular basis, or to provide financial statements and reports; and

"Whereas the majority of the budget is being used by the VON for administrative costs; and

"Whereas the VON has decided to shut down the program and replace it with another that does not include the dining portion which many seniors count on as their only opportunity for social engagement;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to call on the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN to reinstate the South Asian Congregate Dining Program and find a more appropriate partner to facilitate this."

I couldn't wait with this more. I will give it to page Owen and send it to the Clerk.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Mr. Norm Miller: I have received petitions with a number of signatures on them in support of Bill 79, paved shoulders on provincial highways, from Tom de Gryp of London. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation; and

"Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health; and

"Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

"Whereas the member from Parry Sound—Muskoka's private member's bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That private member's Bill 79, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process."

Mr. Speaker, I've signed this in support.

CHILDREN'S PSYCHIATRIC MEDICATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of Chelmsford, in Sudbury, in my riding.

"Whereas there has been a dramatic increase in the use of psychiatric medication on children especially children in care or provincial custody; and

"Whereas it is an established scientific fact that psychiatric drugs cause shrinkage and related problems to the development of the still-developing brain; and

"Whereas it is our responsibility as a society to protect and care for our children;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To create a policy statement discouraging the use of psychiatric drugs on children and send it to all Ontario clinics and mental health care facilities working with children;

"To actively monitor the rate of use of psychiatric drugs on children to ensure that it is going down;

"To amend the professional misconduct regulation so that prescribing medication to children where the use of such medication has not been specifically approved by Health Canada for their age group and purpose constitutes professional misconduct...."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Benjamin to bring it to the Clerk.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I've got all kinds of names on these petitions gathered over the Thanksgiving weekend at the Norfolk County Fair. It's titled "Stop the Gravy Train—Call an Election." It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' dollars on cancelled gas plants; and

"Whereas the people in Ontario have lost confidence in the McGuinty/Wynne government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Request the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to call an election immediately."

I support these sentiments and affix my signature.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is one of thousands I've already delivered and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more, and the cost to the health of the children is worth more than this. I'm going to give it to Louis to deliver to the table.

Interjection.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm being heckled by the Minister of Education. Thank you.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I fully support this, will affix my signature and send it with page Sarhan.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's

long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Ian to bring it to the Clerk.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: This is another petition that I have spoken to the Minister of the Environment about and nothing has happened. This petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care unilaterally introduced cuts to the ophthalmology funding for physician services and diagnostic testing, retroactive to April 1, 2012; and

"Whereas the legislated cuts to the funding for ophthalmology diagnostic tests are up to 80%; and

"Whereas these cuts were implemented without consulting physicians about the impact such cuts will have on the health care of patients;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to protect ophthalmology services and consult with the physicians before making cuts to our health care system."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and give it to Arianna, one of the pages.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows"—on behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized because of this cruel law:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

I'm going to give this to Sophia and sign it to be delivered to the table.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have available for petitions this afternoon.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to a certain bill in his office on October 10.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour did assent:

An Act to regulate the selling and marketing of tanning services and ultraviolet light treatments for tanning / Loi visant à réglementer la vente et la commercialisation de services de bronzage et de traitements par rayonnement ultraviolet à des fins de bronzage.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 9, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon in support of Bill 105. I myself am a former small business person who started with a little idea and grew it into a company that employed, I think at its height, about 10 people. I was able to sell that company when I was elected to Queen's Park, because trying to run a business and trying to represent the interests of your constituents are obviously competing interests and ones that I don't think anybody should attempt to do. So as much as I didn't want to sell the business, it was time to sell the business.

It's interesting that often you talk to people and they claim to understand business and then you find that they've worked at a large institution all their lives. They worked at a bank or they worked at an auto manufacturer or they worked somewhere else. I think those people who truly understand business are the people who have taken an idea, have somehow gone out and found the capital, taken that idea and turned it into something that didn't exist before. We know the underpinning of our economy here in Ontario and Canada is the small business community, so anytime I see a bill that's intended to try to help and assist small businesses—have I spoken before, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We appreciate your second speech, but unfortunately the rules only allow you to speak once at a time. I think I have to go into rotation, don't I? Yes.

Further debate.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 105, An Act to amend—oops, that's the wrong one—Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013. I almost pulled out the wrong file.

Speaker, the objective here is to assist small business by reducing the overall tax burden. What we're told is that the way it's been implemented and proposed so far is

that it will raise exemptions for 60,000 of the smallest businesses. Those with the largest payroll over \$5 million will now pay more as they are no longer entitled to the exemption, and all others will not. Apparently it will cost the treasury about \$5 million. A key message from our side is, we're relatively generally supportive because we need to get small business moving. We need to do anything that will help and enhance small business, but this is definitely not the answer to Ontario's economic crisis.

It's clear that this provincial government is not listening carefully to the needs of small business owners. They don't have a plan to run balanced budgets. We've been waiting here in my time for two years for that to happen and it hasn't. It hadn't happened in the eight before that, and we don't see it in the foreseeable future. I believe we heard in this House this morning that the deficit is going to be at \$12 billion next year from \$9 billion this year. That's going, in my estimation, in the wrong direction, and these young folks in front of you are going to pay that price for many, many years if we don't soon turn this province around. Nor do they have a plan to reduce taxes on small business and address the burden of red tape that they shoulder.

I talk almost every day when I'm at home in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to small businesses and what they tell me is exactly that. They tell me that certainly the challenge to make any kind of a go in business today is getting more daunting and more challenging. They're overburdened by red tape. Every time you turn around, there is another level of government asking them for more information, which takes them away from their true calling, and that is to serve the customers that they rely on to have a profitable business.

1400

It's an endless ream of red tape; it distracts them from their business. It prevents them, because they're spending this time, from actually expanding their business, which would hire more people. As again we heard in this House this morning, between 600,000 and a million people currently are looking for employment. That's just simply unacceptable in today's world. We need to do be doing everything we can to focus our processes and our interests and our passion and our energies towards creating business.

Because of these dire policies or, more to the point, the lack of the plan and policies from this Liberal government, business operators in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and other corners of rural and northern Ontario are facing very, very tough times. From farmers to manufacturers to haircutters, every business is struggling to survive due to the rising cost of business, taxes, overregulation and—it can't be overstated—the cost of energy that, again, this Liberal government has allowed to double over the last eight years. I believe in early November, the rates are going up yet again. That is not something that—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is not something, as my colleague from Northumberland-Quinte West assures me,

businesses in his riding nor mine nor any great riding in this province needs.

Clearly, this Liberal government has a poor record in helping our job creators with tax cuts. Reality suggests the opposite: They prefer to raise taxes and/or invent new taxes at every opportunity. It seems as if this government has an insatiable appetite for new levies. From new farm tire fees—we talked about that in this House. In my riding again, a huge rural, farm, producing, agricultural economy, small businesses—they were hit big-time with 1,800% to 2,000% increases for them—without any consultation, without any stakeholder discussion: “Here it is; accept it and get on with it”; again, Speaker, just no willingness to work with the people that actually drive this. Eighty-five per cent of our economy now is run by the small and medium businesses. We need to be making them the focal point of our economy going forward.

The new trades tax—I just did a petition on the new trades tax. It's hammering the people out there trying to make a living, particularly those self-employed entrepreneurs who take the risk. They don't have a safety net; they don't have the ability to fall back on a government pension or a government safety net. They're out there in the trenches every day, trying to make a go of it. Now they have the added burden of this stifling trades tax, which went, by the way, from, I believe, \$60 a year to \$120 per year plus tax, and it's mandatory. They're starting with 15 trades and they're going to expand it to 157 trades, being compulsory. It's going to decimate a lot of these people. And my fear is it's going to drive more money into the underground economy if they do that. They're threatening to take their licences if they don't pay these fees within 60 days, taking the livelihood of many of these small business owners away from them.

We can't forget the HST and the health tax that this government promised they would not implement but did, right after getting elected. They imposed it on the great people of Ontario with no thought nor regard to what may happen. Despite its repeated promise of “no new taxes,” new taxes keep popping up on consumers, business and everything in between. Again—and I repeat, I realize, Mr. Speaker—despite the promise in the election campaign of 2007, “We will not raise taxes or impose new taxes,” almost the first act they did was a new health tax; they've never actually done anything in my mind to truly alleviate the concerns we have in the health care sector—being the former deputy critic for rural and northern Ontario. After 10 years of raising taxes, the Liberals finally caught on and said, “Hey, we need to do something with small business.” So, lo and behold, they bring in Bill 105.

While I think it's honourable that they brought this in, the reality is they're backtracking on their own tax hike and to deliver some long overdue relief, even though, again, it's only partial relief on a tax that they hiked. It's like what they're doing in the horse racing industry currently. They came in with, again, no stakeholder consultation. They decimated an industry. Now they're running in and saying, “We're going to save the whole

industry. We're going to put \$400 million over five years into this industry to try to save it and bring it back.” What they leave out, conspicuously, in most of those 30-second sound bites, is that they spent \$527 million on the three-person panel over a year and a half to study how they messed up that whole industry—unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, and the people of Ontario, certainly rural Ontario, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, are not being fooled by this for one moment.

I'm extremely pleased to see that Hanover is one of the eight racetracks that will remain. However, again, there they're trying to make it all wonderful news. They've cut from 32 races two years ago to 20—some this year, to 15 next year. If I can do my math a little better than the Liberals, that's about 50%, and that means most of those people are going to be part-time workers at best. So they haven't done anything.

They can't continue to start fires, come in with a pail of water and throw it on, and pretend that they're heroes. This is really what we think they're doing here a little bit with this bill. They're trying to come in—the 30-second sound bites will all sound like they're the big promoters, the big saviours of small business, but they're the people who, in government, have added so much burden to small businesses that most people are trying to figure out a way to get out of business. They're certainly preventing many people from having serious thoughts of going into small business for themselves.

Speaker, I want to remind you that the significant difference in this House is that we on this side of the House—the Conservatives at least—want this employer health tax eliminated altogether. The biggest problem I have with this bill is, how is this going to recoup the job and industry losses? Again, like many of the things they've tried to do, they're tweaking around the edges. In my health care portfolio previously, they said about the LHINs, “We'll go in and we'll tweak around the edges. We'll change it.” Well, they're nothing more than an administrative body that again costs the taxpayers of Ontario \$300 million to shuffle paper. There's very little, if any, direct impact on the people who are lining up for hip replacements, for cancer care treatments, for physiotherapy, which again they've decimated.

It's much of the same, continually, all over: They want to tweak, they want to have the sound bites. And I'll give them their due: They're very good at spin and making people fall for, “They're fixing this.” But they created most of the problems they're supposedly fixing now.

With contributions of approximately \$34 billion to the province's economy and with about 740,000 jobs across Ontario, the agri-food sector is an important industry in Ontario. It is the backbone of our rural economy, and it certainly is in my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Yet today, we have fewer farm operators and fewer farms than ever before.

One that certainly I heard as I was running for election back in 2011, and that continues today, is what they've done to the abattoir industry. They have virtually decimated that industry as well. It's becoming more and more

common for people to leave the business because they can't deal with the unending list of red tape, bureaucracy and administration that this government continues to put in front of them. People have run these businesses for years and years. It was great. It was convenient for the local producer to be able to go somewhere local where they knew them, where they had first-hand experience with them. They understood both sides of the equation. They had a good working relationship. All of a sudden, that was wiped out because of this endless administration and taxation. So they've gone out of business.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: There is a pattern going on here. In almost every industry we talk about, it's a very similar thing. If we take the energy file and plunked it onto these notes, it's almost the same. Don't even get me started on that one.

Some 50% of family-run abattoirs in our region have disappeared over the last decade. This is at least in part due to the government's appetite for excessive red tape and administration. The few butchers that are still left, including Grey County Meats, tell me they're struggling to cover the cost of some of the 400-plus government regulations. Can you imagine being a mom-and-pop shop that started the business or maybe took it over from a proud parent who had built the business for many, many years, and you have to deal with 400-plus regulations just for your one small business? How would you ever have time to actually do any of the work in the business with these types of regulations, limits and expectations put on you?

If this business closes, we will be left with only one in Owen Sound, one in Durham, one in Stayner and one in Coldwater. The next-closest one after that will be Huntsville. That's three and a half, four, four and a half hours one way to get there, which again takes that person out of their business, away from what they're doing—all the costs. This government likes to talk about the environment. Well, why are we making people drive 300 and 400 kilometres when they used to be able to drive 30, 40 or 50? The wear and tear on our highways, the loss of ability to raise money and actually be in the shop working—many of these producers are mom-and-pop shops. When they leave, nothing else goes on in that business and, next thing, they get back and there's another form waiting for them to fill out to tell the government so they can consult.

I think my colleague from Huron-Bruce raised a good point today: Those who can't do, consult. I think one of the words we hear from this Liberal government almost on an hourly basis in this House is, "We will consult. We'll have another conversation." Mr. Speaker, we can't afford any more conversations, because those conversations lead to more red tape, to more forms and to more bureaucracy for that little ol' small business owner who's just trying to make a go and provide for his family.

To the best of my knowledge, the government has no plan to work with Ontario's abattoirs. In fact, the last time this government talked to abattoirs was in 2008, five

years ago, when Leona Dombrowsky still had her seat in rural Ontario and was serving as Ontario's food and agriculture minister.

The Women's Institutes of Ontario have done a great job in trying to champion. They tried throughout that to save an industry that, again, was as local to a small, rural riding as apple pie—to no avail.

1410

This government, as they have done with many of the files that they've unfortunately taken and steamrolled over in rural Ontario, has said, "We know best and we will continue to go down this road," regardless of the opinion of people who are in the industry—if they were to consult those people. It's just unacceptable. It can't go on.

Three ag ministers later and two Liberal Premiers later—and I have to put it on record that the current Premier is both the Minister of Agriculture and the Premier of Ontario, and yet with all of that ability to provide leadership, there's nothing coming our way for these small, local abattoirs. Really, I don't see a whole lot, other than a lot of smoke and mirrors like the Local Food Act, which sounds good but really isn't doing anything significant to create more jobs and productivity for the people, those hard-working farmers in the agricultural sector in our great province. There's really nothing happening out there, and it's shameful.

With no abattoirs anywhere, it becomes pretty difficult to eat local. Again, even that 300-kilometre to 400-kilometre drive to get it to another abattoir or meat processing company somewhere else—there's no one in my riding who believes 300 kilometres to 400 kilometres is local. When they're thinking local, they're thinking 10, 15, 20 miles. That's local to them. They want to support the people who they know and have those lifelong relationships with—the ability to still do business over a handshake, not over 34 forms and government contracts.

Really, what is Bill 105 going to do for the decimated abattoir industry? Probably that: a whole lot of silence. Nothing. They haven't done it. It's like the horse racing industry. They're now coming back, trying to say they're saving it. They've already done the damage. Some 9,000 people, we know for sure, are out of work. Probably the number will still get to the 60,000 that was told to them before they made this fateful decision, and it's just not acceptable.

I'm going to change the channel a little bit, and head to the manufacturers: 300,000 lost jobs, including about 1,000 jobs just in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound alone. That has a huge, significant impact. When you start to think about the horse racing industry that has been decimated and the abattoir industry that has been decimated—now you've got manufacturing. All of those have a ripple effect, because who's buying these types of things?

Earlier today, I talked about the tire tax that they imposed, again without any consultation—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Some \$1,600 on my tractor.

Mr. Bill Walker: Huge—\$1,600 on my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte West's tractor. I'm assum-

ing he wasn't even thinking anywhere close to \$1,600; maybe a couple of hundred dollars would have been the bill, had they not imposed this.

When I talked to those implement dealers in my riding, they said that this was going to have catastrophic consequences, because now they're not going to carry those types of tractors because you can buy them through the States or through Quebec or in other provinces without this needless tax. So they're not going to carry them, which, again, puts someone else out of work in their shop. That person probably employed someone to do something, either in their house, their farm or wherever they happen to be employed. So there's a downward cycle and a downward ripple here, and it's just sad to be a member in this House and to see our province going off the cliff, the way this Liberal government is taking us.

Specifically in Owen Sound, PPG, a glass plant that was there for over 40 years—my brothers both worked there and a number of my cousins worked there and, in fact, I did a term for a summer there—is gone. They closed it down in its heyday. There were about 600 to 700 jobs there. I know you've experienced that in your riding, Mr. Speaker, with this government. You've had lifelong, 100-year corporations going out of business because of the way this Liberal government has mismanaged and imposed needless regulation and red tape on these small businesses.

PPG shut down. Finally, they were down to about 200 people in their employ and they shut down, and there was no plan by this government to help them get back into business and retain them in business or, at the very most, bring some kind of a business to the area that would employ people. There's nothing.

Today, our leader did a press conference. He stood up and said that we've tried to clear the decks with a lot of the bills that are here so that we can totally and solely focus on job creation and getting this province turned around. He had that discussion with the Premier a number of months ago. We've done our part; they've now reneged on that.

We've brought out white papers to invoke and engage the electorate so that they can have a say in where we need to go in the policies and plans that we should be putting in place. We've even offered them to take them all, to take every single page of everything we have if that's going to help this great province get on its feet again and get back on track, but, again, to no avail.

In fact, I don't believe the Premier has even answered the latest letter of our leader, who has reached out and said, "Look, we're here. We want to make this province a go. We want to work with you. We've cleared the deck. Where are you?"

Unfortunately and sadly, I don't even really like reading some of what I'm going to tell you because it shows other closures: Paisley Foodtown, in a small, little village, the only grocery store in town. Part of that, again, was the excessive red tape, the taxes, the government continually coming back and trying to solve their mismanagement and their poor decision-making on the backs

of small business: "We want more money out of your pocket. We want you to produce more to give to us," and I dare say that they can needlessly spend it on things like a billion-dollar boondoggle of the gas plants.

People in my riding are absolutely furious that this government, to save some seats, willfully knew what they were doing and spent \$1 billion to cancel two gas plants. What is that going to cost our economy? What is that going to cost our taxpayers? Most importantly, what is that going to cost those young people who are sitting in front of you and at the other end? They're just here today. I hate to be the bearer of bad news for you young people, but we need to turn this province around so that you can live the glory days that past generations had. If we don't, I'm afraid to say—I have two young children at home—well, middle-aged guys now, 16 and 18, Zach and Ben. I'm afraid for them. I'm truly fearful that we're running a deficit here that we may never get out from under.

When you're paying \$10 billion just to service your debt, that's not helping small business. That's not being able to provide tangible benefits to small business so that they can expand, so that they can build. Who has the confidence to move to Ontario, which has doubled our energy rates in the last eight years? This Liberal government—we used to have the lowest rates in North America. In their tenure of the last eight to 10 years, they've doubled those, and they're going to double again. That doesn't give an investor or a small business owner much confidence to say, "Ontario is the place where I want to be and I want to do my business."

Markdale Tractor Sales, a dealer for almost 30 years of farm implements: They were known far and wide; they sold all across this great province. Again, after 50 years, they closed their doors because of excessive red tape, taxes and the bungling of this government to come to them with their hand out saying, "We want more out of your pocket to be able to fix our bad news."

Terra Footwear: closed; Nordic Furniture: closed; and Markdale is a town of 5,000 residents. Right now, Chapman's Ice Cream—and many of you, I hope, will have heard of Chapman's great ice cream.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would suggest the best; there may be arguments in the House on that. They employ 600 people in a fairly small—

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It is great ice cream.

Mr. Bill Walker: Atta boy, Pete.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, I hope—no, they can't. I'm not going to allow them to move, but with these hydro rates, how long can they hold on, paying these exorbitant hydro rates?

A constituent and small business owner in Warton writes, "I have just received a 'Notice of Proposal to Suspend from the College of Trades.' There is no amount in the letter of what I owe. There is no province of Ontario letterhead on this notice. I renewed both my mechanic's licences on November 11, 2012, at \$60 each,

and the Ontario official receipt says these are good until June 17, 2015. I do not want to be a member of the College of Trades, as I have an interprovincial certification, but they have taken my money and I would like it back. I have been unable to get through to anyone at the college. They do not answer their phones. I have been active in the Abolish the College of Trades Tax grab. I am considering pressing charges as the official Ontario receipt says 'good till 2015,' but the college is threatening to take my licences away. Can you help?

"Mark Van Bilsen

"Self-employed mechanic and farmer in Wiarton."

I have numerous ones here. I'm running out of time. I just can't say enough. We need to be working with that great group of employers, small business, medium-sized business. They're the drivers of our economy. We need less tax and we need less regulation so that this province can thrive again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Tecum-see. I think Tecumseth is a little north of here. We're Tecum-see. Now, mind you, the great Shawnee warrior was called Tecumseh, but the community itself is Tecum-see.

I rise with pleasure to speak on G105, the small business act. What troubles me, I guess, is the definition of small business. Some small businesses are very successful. Some have payrolls of more than \$5 million. Now, \$5 million may be a small amount of money to people who, for example, would spend more than \$1 billion cancelling a government contract. But to me, \$5 million is a lot of money—a heck of a lot of money—and not a small amount at all. Therefore, I cannot support the concept of companies with a payroll of more than \$5 million receiving and remaining eligible for the exemption from the employer health tax, especially any major bank. Currently, banks are allowed to write off their first \$400,000 in payroll. Why on earth would we forgive a bank in this country? Banks make so much money, and yet we want to write them off.

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I have enormous respect for small business people: They're the small engines of our great economy. This act does need some improvement. A friend of mine just dropped into the office the other day with five rolls of red tape that he wanted me to bring in as a prop, but I wouldn't risk that, Speaker. He wanted me to cut some red tape on behalf of small business; I won't be doing that. Thank you for your time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to rise in my place and respond as best as I can to the honourable member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. Someone once asked me if I knew the difference between a pessimist and optimist. I said, "Well, what is it?" They said, "A pessimist says, 'Oh, my goodness, things are terrible, and they couldn't possibly get any worse,' and the optimist says, 'Oh sure, they could.'"

I'm not sure where the member was coming from over there. I can say, and I want to say here, that I am part of a government that has cut business taxes, that has done all kinds of things to correct a deplorable electrical system so that we have power to spare.

I come from a small business—

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Did I interrupt you when you spoke? I didn't.

We look at red tape all the time. I agree with the honourable member to the extent that there is some identifiable red tape that, if eliminated, can make business a bit easier. We're for that. I know that when I had the privilege of serving as the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, it was an ongoing challenge. In fact, I co-chaired, with the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, an Open for Business group that cut agri-food industry red tape by 28%. We worked very, very hard at that.

As for history around some of the impediments, governments make mistakes. We've owned up to some of the difficulties around the gas plants. But you've got some on your side of the House, too: the stranded debt, the sale of the 407. When we came to office in 2003, all the financial records were shredded. We had to bring back the former auditor to make the case for there being a deficit there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm standing out of respect for the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. What he did is, he stayed on focus and talked about small business and the implications for his riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. I give him credit because that's what's missing.

On the other side I hear the minister, a member of cabinet, up there sort of excusing—an apologist for Premier Wynne. Really, when you get down to it, I think we should look at independent observations made in the province of Ontario.

Here's a recent article, "The Stolen Decade: 10 years of Liberal Rule Marked by Scandal, Boondoggles, Broken Promises and Mounting Debt." If you look at the next article, "Dialogue Needed on Soaring Debt"—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is from the Toronto Star; these are your briefing notes. It says, "We need to talk about debt, deficits, unfunded pension liabilities and more."

Our leader, Tim Hudak, put something on the table. He said he gave you the plan. We've cleared the deck. That means that we've taken all this legislation off the table by allowing it to go to committee. He challenged the Premier of Ontario to bring forward a jobs plan. What do we have? More red tape. That's exactly it.

This bill itself, our former finance critic, Mr. Peter Shurman, has just said—and he has read this in detail—that it's a complete sham, an absolute waste of time. I'm quoting him, if somebody wants to attribute it.

What it really does, though—the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away—is provide an exemption threshold.

They've raised the threshold for those payrolls under \$400,000. They've given them more room so that they don't pay into this employer health tax, which is a Liberal tax. What they do now is they are going to shift that to other medium-sized businesses. They're going to tax—one of our critics here has pointed out that there's the new tax on trades, which could be translated into a tax on business, a tax on jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate and to add my comments to the comments from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He pointed out a couple of dozen deficiencies when it comes to the dealings of this government in respect to helping small business: high energy prices, regulatory barriers, environments that are not conducive to the growth particularly of small business. He didn't really speak to the merits of Bill 105, in terms of what it does. I certainly will do that in my 20-minute hit during this period.

I can tell you that New Democrats agree with the principle of facilitating a tax regime that supports those who create jobs the most, and that is small businesses in this country. The large employers, those that he had mentioned—I'm certain several of them fell victim to free trade agreements, particularly the effects of the North American Free Trade Agreement. The member talked about our beef industry, our domestic abattoirs. Those businesses certainly fell victim to the precursor to NAFTA, which was the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, GATT. At 10 years old, I was on the front lawn of Parliament Hill fighting against that, because we knew—we heard from farmers and small business owners—how this was going to decimate their markets. We see the ill effects. Here we are, decades into that agreement.

Now we see a wonderful new agreement supported by the Liberal government, certainly endorsed by the Progressive Conservatives: CETA, the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, with the European Union. You want to talk about crushing small businesses, the ability for governments to procure from small businesses—that's what CETA will be doing in earnest. We don't have those debates in this House because I guess it might be beyond the realm of people to talk about, but I think it's a part of this debate and something that should be fully considered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, so we return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to those who spoke as well: the Minister of Community and Social Services, the member from Durham, the member from Essex and of course the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

I'm just going to go back to where I was at the first. Small business is driving our province, it's driving our country, and we need to be finding ways to work with

them. We need to find ways to keep people working. We need to find ways to ensure that people want to come to our great province of Ontario. One of the first things we have to do there is reverse the energy situation we have. The Minister of Community and Social Services made a comment that we produce a lot of energy. Yes, he's right. We paid half a billion dollars last year to other provinces and the United States to take our surplus, yet they keep steamrolling and putting up more wind turbines with this Green Energy Act.

The Premier today said that sometimes when you're presented with different information, after you've made your initial thought process you need to make a different decision. I would like to challenge her today that one way she could help small business, more than this employer health tax proposal that they're putting forward, is to actually put a moratorium, as we have called for—my colleague from Huron–Bruce and a number of my other colleagues, including our leader, Tim Hudak—on that Green Energy Act absolutely immediately. Speaker, that is the biggest thing that is actually impacting our small businesses, in addition to the ludicrous red tape and administration and the taxes that they keep enforcing and imposing on the great people in these small businesses.

They're the true entrepreneurs. They're the people who actually get up in the morning and say, "You know what? I don't need a safety net. I'm going to go out, because I have skills and abilities, and I want to make a go of it. I want to do that without the help of anyone. Just get out of my way and keep things simple." They don't need more red tape. They don't need more forms. They don't need more liability issues that put them out of business and actually prevent them from going down the road. We need to ensure that we're all focused on creating jobs so that those young people in front of you have an opportunity, when they go through school and come out at the other end, will have the best province. I am an optimist, because I'm here fighting for it and will every day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure to speak in this House. We've had a week in our constituencies. All of us, I'm sure, during that week have enjoyed small business in our ridings.

I want to say that as New Democrats we're going to support this bill. It's a very small step; it's a very small bill. It's, in fact, a suggestion we made towards the budget to help with small business.

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It's time to really set the record straight in terms of which party is truly on the side of small business—small business that provides 85% of the new jobs in this province. If we want to create new jobs, and this government says it does, then we'd better be doing something to support small business, because that's where they're created.

Who does the best job at supporting small business in this country? I'm proud to say it's the NDP government

in Manitoba that does, with a 0% tax rate for small business; not in a Conservative-led province, not in a Liberal-led province, but in a New Democrat-led province—0%. And they dropped it from 8%. Why? Because they see the same statistics that we do: Small business creates 85% of new jobs.

Now, first of all, a shout-out to the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas, which represents 30,000 of our small businesses on our main streets—not necessarily in our malls, but on our main streets. A shout-out to them; they're an incredible organization. If any of those here take a gander at their website, they will see their current bugbears, their demands. Interestingly enough, Mr. Speaker, for example, around minimum wage and around workers' rights, when the New Democratic Party first tabled the \$10 minimum wage bill—it was the first bill I tabled; I'm very proud to have done that and built a campaign that finally, with the labour movement, forced the government into action on minimum wage. There's a whole campaign starting now to force the government into action on minimum wage, which they had not done in the last seven years—one of the major ways we can fight poverty in this province.

In that campaign, guess who stood with us? Guess who stood with us on raising the minimum wage? It wasn't big business. Not to name names, but we can name some: Walmart. It wasn't the Walmarts of the world; it wasn't the McDonald's of the world. No, it was the small business owners who stood up, back then, and said, "We pay a living wage, and we've had to pay a living wage because the only way we can compete with the big guys in the malls is to pay a living wage." So a shout-out to Len from Home Hardware in Parkdale-High Park; he was one of the people who came forward and talked about how he paid a living wage to his employees.

I want to give a shout-out to all of my business improvement areas and associations in Parkdale-High Park. It's phenomenal work they do, and they really have completely contributed to the vibrancy of my riding. I have to say, when I first moved into my riding about 20 years ago, you could walk along Queen West, Roncesvalles to Dufferin, and it was pretty dead after about 9 o'clock at night. Now, it's vibrant. It has some of the best restaurants in Toronto. I would say to all the members who are here during the week, maybe from their rural ridings, you should check out Parkdale-High Park for some of the best businesses—absolutely. Grand Electric: best tacos in town, according to food reviewers, right at the corner of my street, right on Queen Street. Phenomenal restaurants along Queen Street: Porzia, recommended by American Vogue—who knew?—on Queen West, right in the heart of Parkdale. Go up to Roncesvalles. You'll see Barque. You'll see some phenomenal restaurants and the whole revitalization of the Roncesvalles area—phenomenal, and driven by small business.

Go up to the Junction, the most improved area. When I opened my constituency office in the Junction, there were about 20 empty storefronts. Now, that place is just vibrant: lots of young people; the Sweet Potato, a great

grocery store full of organic produce, local produce. By the way, a shout-out to the West End Food Co-op in Parkdale as well, where that goes. But again, phenomenal restaurants: We were taping my Google Hangout last Friday in Roux, a new restaurant very close to my constituency office—phenomenal place, phenomenal food.

Bloor West is an established area. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Bloor West was the very first business improvement area in the world. It started over 40 years ago. A shout-out to Alex Ling—there's a little square named after him—one of the men who really started Bloor West small business. And the whole idea of having a business improvement area started in Bloor West. How exciting, and we were there to celebrate that with them.

But also, of course, we as New Democrats stand here in support of small business. I stand here in support of small business because it's pretty personal for me. My son has a small business. I had a small business. I remember it very, very well. I started it when my children were very little. I started, as do most women who start small businesses—by the way, many women start and run successful small businesses. I started, I remember, with a \$5,000 loan, and I didn't have a job. I had been at home for a couple of years with my son. I was just getting back into the workforce. I started with \$5,000, a desk and a phone. I think, within two years, we were billing half a million dollars. How did we do that? We did it with other women. I hired nothing but women. We placed women in public relations and communications, the arts; places like the AGO and the TSO were clients of mine. It was phenomenal. It was a great success, and I enjoyed running it. We found jobs for women; that's what we did. I moved on from that. It allowed me to go back to school and do my doctorate and get into the ministry, and that led me here. So the very first big career I had was in small business. But I can tell you, I did it with no one's help—no government's help. I did it with nothing but a phone and a desk. I did it, yes, with lots of red tape to fill out. I did it with no benefits, and let me tell you, a young family trying to get by with no benefits whatsoever—that's tricky, that's difficult. That's what small business looks like.

My son: a very typical small business entrepreneur of this era; graduated from school in East Asian studies; learned to speak Mandarin. Did it get him a job? No, because he's like so many young people who graduate from university these days. There are no jobs for them. Well, there are McJobs for them. In fact, what he started doing during his university years was being a barista, like so many other young baristas, working—we won't mention the chain; not a small business chain that he worked for. But that's where he got his basic skills, and then he moved from that into another independent small coffee shop, and then started his own, because—guess what?—there were no other jobs. He started again, with a bank loan. A bank loan started it up, and now it's the go-to place in my area for all the young and the hip. There are many young, hip people here in Queen's Park. So I suggest you all come down to Queen and Dunn and get

yourself a latte—wonderful latte art, by the way—or some of the best espresso in Toronto, according to Toronto Life, among others. So go on down to Queen and Dunn, to Capital Espresso, hang out with my son and tell him that his mom sent you, and you will blend right in. I suggest you loosen your ties a little bit. Other than that, you'll be fine, and he'll treat you very well.

Mr. Speaker, he's a classic young business owner, which is to say, he pays his rent; he feeds himself; he has no benefits. There are no benefits to go with the job. He has provided employment for about 10 people now over the course of just a few years of being in business, and believes in paying his staff fairly, so that means he doesn't take as much home. He's getting by, but he's not thriving. He's not earning enough to ever have a family on. He's not earning enough to ever buy a home on in the city of Toronto, that's for sure.

That is the plight and that is the life of entrepreneurs. Why does he do it? He does it because he has a passion for it. He does it because he loves it. He actually thinks he produces the best coffee in Toronto, or some of the best coffee in Toronto. In fact, he invented a very good marketing strategy, which was called a disloyalty card. How it worked was, if you had a coffee at his coffee place and then you went to every other indie coffee place on the card, at the end of that, you got a free coffee. It wasn't just for one coffee place; it was to support other small businesses, other coffee owners like himself who had started out. It got them an article in *The Globe and Mail* and a lot of publicity and it helped. It did well.

Those are the stories of small business. Those are pretty successful stories of small business. I could tell you some others. I could tell you about my daughter, who tried to start a small business; started a bar; had managed a bar in the past; went in with other partners—always potentially a problem in small business, but that's the only way you can get capital together to start one these days—and ended up losing a whole lot of money. She's still paying that money back. I tell her that it's still cheaper than a master's in business administration, the experience she gained in doing that—but still paying that money back. That's the plight of many small business owners who end up going into bankruptcy because they just can't afford to keep it going, and what a tragedy that is when that happens. As we know, bankruptcies are on the rise. It's difficult; it's ever more difficult to start a small business.

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To go back to the TABIA website, if you're interested in knowing what small business wants and what small business asks for, you can go to no better place than that. What you'll see is the organization that really represents small business—30,000 of them.

Here's number one on their hit list. Here's number one of the requirements they ask from this government.

They're happy about this, by the way, but this really doesn't help small business. What this does is, it doesn't help big business anymore. That's what it does, because, really, what the Liberals are about is helping very large business.

I'll have a few minutes to talk about how they and the Conservatives have helped one client company, EllisDon. No small business gets that kind of help in this place, boy. But you know, if you have \$3 billion in profit, then you get help. In fact, if you've got \$3 billion in profit, you get your own bill written for you, which is what happened here: Bill 74, written on behalf of one client company. That's what happens if you're a big business in this place.

If you're a small business, what do you want? Number one, you want reform of the MPAC system. Over and over and over again, I hear this when I'm wandering around my constituency and talking to small business owners. What is the MPAC system? It's the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. This is a provincial body that assesses property taxes for businesses and for residents, and they do—may I say it?—a terrible, terrible job. They do a terrible, terrible job of it.

Every four years, when those assessments come up, I have a town hall in my riding. I suggest the rest of you should too. You'll have standing room only of people complaining about their MPAC assessments. Why? Because they're unfair. They're unfair.

They are a tax on unrealized income; that's number one. It's like saying to someone here, "Well, you're making six figures now, but I think that in three years you're going to be making about—I think you're going to make twice as much in three years, so I'm going to tax you on what you're going to make in three years"—not what you're making now, not what you're worth now, but in three years. That's what MPAC does. It does it on our houses, and it does it on our businesses.

Now, on our houses—some of us have been lucky in real estate, and they tend to go up, so we don't complain as much. But let me tell you, if you have a house identical to your neighbour's, there are many MPAC assessments that will say it's not, that one house will pay more taxes than another.

For a senior on a fixed income who has maybe paid off their house a long time ago, they may lose their house because of their MPAC assessments, because, again, the assessment is on what the house is worth if they sold it. But they don't want to sell it, Mr. Speaker. They don't want to sell it. They don't want to have to sell it, and yet many of them have to sell it.

Now, the impact on business is even more nefarious. What happens to small business? That is built into their leases, or is in their ownership, if they own the building they're in. That is passed on to them directly in their rent, and many of the MPAC assessments on small business are more than they pay in rent now. It gets passed on to them, if it's the landlord, or if they are the landlord, they have to swallow it. This is ridiculous—again, based on what they might get if they had to sell their business, according to some government bureaucrat who has never run a small business in their life.

This is the tax cut that hurts the most, and that's what TABIA is focused on, and that's what they'd like to see some relief on.

In fact, again, MPAC is the same government agency that—do you remember? They were bringing their high-paid executives—all political appointments, I'm sure—down to TIFF and having wonderful dinners at taxpayers' expense. That wasn't too long ago. That was MPAC too. I can tell you that when you see that kind of news story in the paper, and you're a small business hanging on by your fingernails and just barely getting by, it hurts. It hurts. So MPAC: a huge, huge bugbear for small business.

The other one, of course, for the 416 businesses is that they're not assessed the same for business education tax either. They're not assessed the same there. Again, we started a campaign in the New Democratic Party to try to affect that. The government brought it down a little bit—not as far as we asked them to, but they brought it down a little bit there as well.

Two instances of small businesses right across Ontario that have been directly attacked by this government: One of them is small butcher shops. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound talked about abattoirs. I can tell you that old Polish butcher shops in my neighbourhood that had been there in business for 40 years were driven out of business by regulatory changes that this government brought in. Maple Leaf Foods is still doing okay, but the small mom-and-pop butcher shops are no more.

The other businesses that were hurt across the province—and it wasn't that long ago—were small pharmacies. Again, small pharmacies were whacked by this government, attacked directly by this government. We're seeing lots of big pharmacies open up, not a lot of little pharmacies making a go of it. I remember running around to all of them getting petitions signed, their petitions that I presented here, that many of us presented here.

Again, this is not a government on behalf of Main Street. This is a government, though, on behalf of big business—no question. When one company, EllisDon, can get their own bill brought in and passed by this government—and by the way, I love that the Premier has changed her mind about this. She could have changed her mind on the Thursday that we debated it here, but she didn't. She could have withdrawn Bill 74 from that omnibus bill, but she didn't. Now, all of a sudden, she has. We don't know, actually, where she stands on that anymore, but we do know how straightforward it is, if you are a company with \$3 billion in profits, in getting your voice heard in this House. But if you have a \$400,000 or \$500,000 payroll or less, good luck. Good luck having your voice heard in this House. That's simply the reality.

I just have a few minutes left. I want to give some shout-outs to some phenomenal small businesses in my neighbourhood, ones that have really excelled with very little help. There are places like Barque, Dr. Generosity, Earth Glow, Indie Alehouse and Butcher by Nature that still by make a go of it despite the attack on small butchers.

By the way, the other thing the Minister of Labour is now doing is sending out inspectors, not to the big

employers—no, no, no; only one in 100 of employers ever see anybody from the Ministry of Labour to look at their labour practices—but the little ma-and-pa stores in my area. What? This is ridiculous. Talking about red tape, you've got three employees and you get a visit from the Ministry of Labour, but if you have 300, you don't? What?

Again, to get back to what this bill is about, it's not really supporting small business. Not giving a big break to big business is what it's doing. Before this bill—something we asked for in the budget, we in the New Democratic Party—large banks, huge corporations could forget the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of an employer's payroll, and now they don't. Now it's fair. Now the person with one employee is treated a little bit differently from the person with 1,000 employees. So it's really not helping small business; it's just not giving yet another gift to big business, something we support. In fact, we have long said that this government needs to close the corporate tax loopholes like the \$1.4-billion giveaway corporate tax loophole that they give to big business, not to mention the bills they pass on behalf of single companies like EllisDon, and instead start focusing on those that actually produce the jobs, and that's small business.

Again, to go back to my initial point, small business produces 85% of the new employment in this province. We need to do everything we can to assist our young and aged entrepreneurs in keeping their businesses, setting up their businesses and having their businesses thrive—and we don't. The other demand, very quickly, is help with employment for small businesses. That would help them because they do want to hire on more employees.

Again, do we support this? Yes, we do. It's a small, small step in not giving yet more hundreds of millions away to big corporations. But supporting small business, we're still waiting for that. I've been here—I'm into my eighth year yet—and we're still waiting for a government that actually stands up for small business. In fact, they don't even have a minister in charge of small business anymore. That's how highly they think of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak following the member from Parkdale-High Park. I'm pleased to be given about two minutes to talk about the bill. There's a big portion of this bill, Bill 105, that also talks about charity. I just want to remind the members of the House, with respect to this portion of the bill, that many of us in the House are debating focused only on small business when, in reality, the bill also covers recognized charities.

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We know yesterday in my city, the city of Toronto, we just hosted the international marathon, and many of the proceeds from the marathon went to numerous charities across the province. Like the member from Parkdale-High Park, I want to shout out to various recognized charities, like Heart and Stroke, the Cancer Society, the Lung Association and Alzheimer's.

But, Mr. Speaker, Bill 105—everybody is focused mainly on the small businesses in terms of exemptions of the employer's health tax. There's a good portion of the bill that talks about the charities, and it is the right thing to do, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to read a portion of the bill so that we will remind the members that as we debate Bill 105, we need to not forget there's various recognized charities that this bill will help. So section 2.1, subsection 9, of the act provides an exemption amount for an employer who is a registered charity. It's determined without reference to its total Ontario remuneration period. But, also, furthermore, the new section 2.1, subsection 11, authorizes the minister "to make regulations providing for special rules that apply to employers who are registered charities."

So at the end of the day, it's not just about supporting small businesses to ensure that they'll be successful in Ontario. We also need to support recognized registered charities across Ontario, so they will be supported through this bill, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for this opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to comment on my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, and interesting to hear that she has children who are self-employed and working in small business. They know all about what we're talking about here.

She talked about the abattoirs which, again, this government has run out, not only in the rural areas, which I know, but not too far from where she is, of course. And small pharmacies: We shouldn't forget that because, yes, I forgot, actually, how much damage this government did to a lot of the pharmacists across our great province.

As I said in my remarks, and I think she echoed a lot of it, there is no plan here. The government is devoid of a plan to actually put people back to work. They tinker on the edges; they bring out bills that sound wonderful—helping small business act. Well, helping small business would be having a plan. Helping small business would be ensuring that they're lowering taxes, not raising taxes on all the small business. Some 85%, as we've heard in this House, of all jobs are driven by small businesses in this great province.

We don't see anything that they're really doing to help those businesses. What they're doing is adding on more red tape, more bureaucracy, increased energy rates and, at every turn, more red tape.

The skilled trades tax that we're putting on people: Now they've got inspectors going out. We heard in this House last week from one of our colleagues that a barber in their community—it was going to basically shut him down. I've had people in my riding saying that they're getting calls saying either you pay your money in 60 days—which has gone from \$60 for three years to \$120 plus tax for one year—and if you don't, you're out of business.

Speaker, there's no plan. There's red tape. There's increasing taxes from this government. Let's not forget the

cost to service the debt at \$10 billion a year—just to service the debt. What could that be doing to help our small businesses put programs in place that would actually encourage and entice people to expand their business, to bring new people into their business, to start at least one more job in each business? Just think of the impact that that would have as a ripple, if we could get every small business in Ontario to add one person. What's going to happen with this government is that they're going to be actually laying off more people, like they did in the horse racing sector. We need more ability, less taxes and a plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the remarks that were made by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park. There's no question that there may be some small step forward here that's useful to people who are self-employed or operating a small business in Ontario, but, Speaker, as my colleague has said, clearly in this province it's the big businesses, the major corporations, that get the breaks, and the small outfits—mom-and-pop or self-employed—that have a tough time.

When this government changed sales tax, brought in the HST, I talked to my constituents who are self-employed, one- and two-person outfits who are going to be hit with an expense that they didn't have to absorb in the past, that they were going to have to put on top of what they were charging to their clients. For them, it was a big deal.

Yet major construction companies and developers were getting a huge break—a huge break. We see this again with the EllisDon bill: If you're big enough, the rules will be bent around your convenience. Whether it changes labour law in this province or not, whether it puts at disadvantage tens of thousands or hundreds of thousands of workers or not, the law will be rewritten so that a very big company, EllisDon, can profit; while at the same time, the self-employed, people who run small consultancies and small retail operations, are finding themselves more and more stressed and stretched.

My riding has one of the highest percentage of self-employed people in this province. I have to tell you, right now, they do not appreciate the lack of care and interest that they see coming from this government.

This government has turned its back on the people of Ontario, and eventually the people of Ontario will turn their back on them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I am very pleased to speak today on Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, because, as I've said many times here in the House, my family is from small business. My grandfather had a business. My dad had the same business. My brother is having the same business, and now his son is with him running the same business. So I know what it is, and I know that government has to pay very much attention to small business. The small businesses are those who are

constant in a community. It's not fly-by-night companies. They are well established. They go from generation to generation, and often they are very successful because there is one of them in the community, and they're also very generous when giving their time to sit on different boards and different social organizations in the community. So when I speak about small business, I'm very—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: You know what you're talking about.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I know what I'm talking about.

I'm very pleased to see that now my nephew is going to take over a business that has been established from generation to generation.

When, as government, we put forward a different rule, a different regulation or a different piece of legislation, we have to also think about the impact that it will have on our small businesses. That's what this bill is all about. This bill is there to help small businesses, social agencies and not-for-profit organizations, and I'm very glad to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Parkdale–High Park for her reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to say thank you to everybody who weighed in on this debate. Just a bit of an announcement, tonight, by the way: At the CN Tower, there is an event put on by small business called Shop The Neighbourhood. The whole focus of that is to think global and shop local. So shop on your main street. That's critical. Coming up is a big weekend for cross-border shopping. We don't want that; we want people to stay home, spend their money around the corner in their own locales, and that's what this is going to be a kickoff for tonight, for the whole of November and, of course, hopefully, onward from there.

Suffice to say, the very best record in Canada when treating small business—people should know this because there are many myths out there to the contrary—is the New Democratic Party's example in Manitoba of a 0% business tax for small business, the lowest in all of Canada. We're proud of that. We do it for a reason: because we know small business produces 85% of the new jobs.

To all of those small business workers who are out there, you should know that for the most part, your employer cares more about you than your big business counterparts. I mentioned the struggle, always, for a living wage, which is part of our DNA as a party as well, which is not in contradiction to the best interests of small business, but, actually, is in the same direction that most small business owners have been going for years.

So what we ask of this government—yes, this is a small step for small business. It's one we suggested and asked for in the budget, and they've come through. Good.

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But there's so much more. We need to reform MPAC. We need to reform the business education tax. We need

to reinstate, possibly, the grants that, again, another NDP government gave to small business for employing folk and have suggested that. We need to do so much more to help small business because that is the future of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it is a pleasure to take part in this particular debate. At the outset, I think it's my understanding that, when all is said and done, everyone is going to vote for this bill because this bill does something important. It's a reform to the employer health tax that is targeted at helping some 60,000 Ontario small businesses. If it does that, then almost by definition, it promotes growth, it promotes our economy, and it helps create jobs.

But, Speaker, this is part of Ontario's plan to get back to a balanced budget, and that plan is something that no other party has. It's the ability to maintain our progress with that plan that set Ontario uniquely apart from every other government in Canada. What other government has achieved all of its recession recovery targets since the bottom of the recession in the fall of 2009? The answer is no other. The feds haven't. Alberta hasn't. Only Ontario has never failed to meet its deficit reduction targets and has exceeded them each and every year, for four fiscal years in a row.

That's what makes this bill, Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, so important. What it means is that businesses with annual payrolls of under \$5 million will be exempt from paying the employer health tax on the first \$450,000 of their payroll each year. More importantly, that exemption will be indexed to inflation about every five years, which ensures that small businesses are going to see consistency. They won't see bracket creep remove an exemption.

Hopefully, as a small business, they'll be like Cyclone Manufacturing in Meadowvale, which started out as exactly that type of small business, moving to Meadowvale in 2008, one operation with about 80 employees. They were in every way a small business. Cyclone Manufacturing is in the business of fabricating airframe parts. Their clients are everybody: Embraer, Boeing, Gulfstream, Bombardier—you name it. Everybody in the world uses parts from Cyclone Manufacturing. In fact, they're not even a small business anymore. They've grown from one to two to three to four, and they now have four locations in Mississauga and Milton. Instead of employing about 80 people, now they employ closer to 500 people. In fact, during the recession, Meadowvale—not merely with Cyclone but also with Mitutoyo and a few others—became a world-class aerospace manufacturing hub.

A lot of that came about because of some of the actions of our government in not merely overcoming a \$5.6-billion deficit when we were first elected 10 years ago, but paying all of that down. We're Liberals; we do this the old-fashioned way when dealing with debt. We pay it down. The government ran three consecutive bal-

anced budgets in those fiscal years that ended in 2006, 2007 and 2008. In those three consecutive balanced budgets, those surpluses, in part, were devoted to paying down debt. We all believe in paying down debt on this side of the House. That's part of the way that Ontario has restored confidence in this province's economy and created jobs after eight long-lost years of PC government and five longer-lost years of NDP government.

So what is it that this bill aims to affect? It talks about the employer health tax, which each year raises \$5.3 billion, or roughly 4.6% of Ontario's revenues. That's important. This new exemption reduces the cost of hiring, and it reduces the burden of administration for small businesses. How many people will it then affect? Most of us know, if we look at the lists that are put out by our board of trade or chamber of commerce, that something in the neighbourhood of 95% to 98% of the businesses in our communities would be classified as small businesses. Those archetypal big businesses only represent 1% to 3%, depending on where you're from, of all of the firms in your area. So when we talk about helping small businesses, what we're really talking about is nearly 90% to 95% of all the businesses in our community. Whether they're franchise operations, whether they're chains, whether they're mom-and-pop shops or whether they're small incorporated companies, these are the ones that Ontario has done a good job of helping lift up and to say, "Let's see what we can do to help some of you, who aspire to do so, become larger businesses," just like Cyclone; just like other businesses in Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville and other businesses across the GTA.

This bill helps something like 60,000 businesses in Ontario. It helps them with what they'll see as a reduction in their taxes, and that reduction comes about as a result of the reforms introduced by this bill, Bill 105. Among those 60,000 businesses, roughly 12,000 businesses will no longer pay this employer health tax at all. That's one of the things that our government—and, in this case, allowing for the fact that my understanding is that the other parties will also support this bill—that's what our collective government together has done to create the strongest environment in North America for small businesses.

I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the ways in which Ontario has improved that business climate over the last 10 years. Ten years ago, we had an archaic form of taxation which, four years ago, the province announced it was getting rid of, and three years ago it did. That was the provincial sales tax. The provincial sales tax of the day was a tax upon a tax upon a tax upon a tax, depending on how many steps in the value chain that you or your firm had to go through before your product was sold. It didn't allow you to deduct the tax that you paid on things that you consumed inside your business. It was only for things that you had acquired and then subsequently resold—a very inefficient tax. By the way, one of the reasons that, as Ontarians, we retain a sustainable, competitive edge over our neighbouring jurisdictions in

the United States is because they still, in many cases, do tax in that hopelessly inefficient manner. Across Canada, federally, our goods and services tax is just the type of value-added tax that allows people to deduct from all of the tax they charged all the tax they paid and only remit the difference. It's simple, and it works.

In Ontario, we took a convoluted tax that had something like 6,000 pages of rules and took 1,240 people in the Ontario public service to administer, and three years ago, that was phased out. We now have a compatible value-added tax which only needs one level of government—the feds—to collect, and now we have, through the HST, one of the key things that got Ontario through the recession. We didn't see revenues for the province collapse the way other jurisdictions did, particularly in America. It enabled Ontario to be one of the last places into the most recent recession and the first place out.

I'm looking at, how does Ontario rate in terms of competitiveness? By a very small margin, British Columbia has a lower corporate income tax rate in Canada than Ontario does, and by 1.5 percentage points, so does Alberta. But other than that, our corporate income tax rate is the lowest in Canada, and that, for a manufacturing jurisdiction, says something. Out in BC and Alberta, a lot of their local economy is based on their resource industries. For us, our economy is based on knowledge work and it's based on value-added manufacturing, and for us, that low corporate income tax rate is very important.

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One of the things that Ontario has done uniquely well in the last 10 years is to support research and development. For example, there's a 4.5% non-refundable—in other words, you don't have to give it back—Ontario Research and Development Tax Credit. It meant that in the year 2012, the last year for which reliable numbers are available, Ontario companies were able to devote \$170 million of their own money, which came back to them through the tax credit, toward research and development in this province. It meant that they could create jobs here. More importantly, it gave them an incentive to commercialize their products right here in Ontario.

There's a 10% refundable Ontario Innovation Tax Credit for small and medium-sized corporations. In this current fiscal year of 2013-14—the fiscal year in Ontario will end on March 31, 2014; new fiscal years always start on April 1—that Ontario Innovation Tax Credit will put \$249 million, a quarter of a billion dollars, into the hands of firms that are doing innovative things in their labs, in their product development, that are coming up with new things to do and new ways of doing things.

In Ontario today, there's a 20% refundable tax credit for research and development that is contracted to qualifying Ontario research institutions. That amounted to \$13 million of tax relief for firms at the cutting edge of their industries. So those kinds of businesses that Ontario aims to attract—businesses that employ people with a post-secondary diploma or degree, businesses that are high-value, high-wage industries—have been rewarded for

doing innovative research work right here in Ontario, and it's working.

In the United States, even today, some four years after the bottom of the last recession, America has still not recovered all of the jobs that it has lost. It's a little under 80%—77% or 78% as of September, if my numbers are accurate. Great Britain has recovered a little bit more than 100% of their job losses. Europe is still struggling to recover all of its job losses. How are we doing here in Ontario? We have recovered 170% of our job losses. That's 1-7-0; 170% of the people who had lost their jobs are now working. In the main, these are full-time jobs. These are jobs that require a higher education, and these are jobs that pay a good wage. These are the kind of jobs that every industrial jurisdiction in the world is setting out to gather, and here in Ontario we found a way to do that. We found a way to attract the best companies, and we found a way to make sure that not only can we as Ontarians share in their prosperity, but they as companies get a way to operate economically and fairly.

Our tax system is a big help. Our tax system doesn't double- and triple-tax things the way it used to. Our tax system is now lean and efficient. Contrast that with the United States. The United States is no good at distributing income through their tax system, and the United States is not that good at collecting taxes either. In fact, the United States actually has an average higher marginal tax rate than does Ontario. The US tax system does need a lot of attention, but that really is a problem that Americans have to solve.

What we have here in Ontario is, after 10 years of effort, a tax system that allows Ontario companies to have a sustainable, competitive advantage over the United States, and to say to companies that are looking at locating in America or anywhere else in the industrialized heartland of North America—"Where are we going to find all of the things that we need to find? We need to find an educated workforce. We can find that in Ontario. We need to have a first-class transportation system to be able to move our goods to market. We can find that in Ontario. We need to have a place with a good, solid, workable banking system. We can find that in Ontario. And we need to have a place that's competitive in taxes, and we can certainly find that in Ontario."

So for the last 10 years, what this province has done is to make Ontario not merely a better place to grow up, to raise a family, to get an education and to start a business, but a better place to run a business. There's a difference between making a jurisdiction a better place to start a business and a better place to run a business. What you don't want to have happen is to have people say, "I can start something here in Ontario, but when the time comes to grow, I've got to find my money in Asia and I've got to relocate to the States or to Europe." What Ontario has done in the last 10 years is to reward companies by making it easy and profitable for them to grow their business here in Ontario, and that too is working.

Internationally, Ontario's current combined federal-provincial corporate income tax rate of 26.5% is lower

than the 2013 average combined federal-state corporate income tax rate of 39.3% in the US and the average corporate income tax rate of G8 and G20 member countries. And by the way, it's almost exactly that of all of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development countries.

Speaker, this is just a part of a broader overall strategy by the province of Ontario to continue to make Ontario the most attractive place to employ people and to do business in North America. This particular exemption will continue to reduce the cost of hiring and it, most importantly, will reduce the burden of administration, often called red tape, for small businesses.

Here's something that a lot of people don't know: In our government, for the last several years, if you're a minister, before you can add a new rule or a new regulation, you've got to subtract at least two more. Across ministries, there's almost like a cap-and-trade scheme in effect where, over the years, Ontario has been reducing the administrative burden on small businesses. Where it's necessary to institute new regulations, absolutely it will be done, because our workplaces will be safe and our procedures will be fair and enforceable. But the important part is that as these things evolve, we've got to keep reviewing. What's no longer needed? What things can be combined? That's one thing that our government has excelled at over the years, is getting rid of obsolete or out-of-date regulation.

These particular cuts to the business education tax rates began in 2007. In aggregate, they've saved Ontario businesses \$200 million. Ontario is parallel to a 2013 federal budget measure to extend to the end of 2015 the capital cost allowance for manufacturing and processing machinery and equipment. The impact of that is if you're a manufacturer, what we want you to do is to upgrade the things that you have in your plant. And if you're upgrading your machinery, that means that as a manufacturer you're probably going to have a sharper pencil than the guy who's trying to squeeze a few extra years out of some obsolete machinery that may be years or decades old. If you've got the best, the most efficient, the fastest, the most energy-efficient stuff, then probably not only will you be making a better product, but you'll be able to offer it through your distribution channel at a lower price, which is exactly what we want. In fact, this measure will reduce Ontario taxes payable by manufacturing businesses by approximately \$265 million over three years. That's more than a quarter of a billion dollars in tax that Ontario manufacturers won't have to pay. That makes those employers better able to hire some of the high-quality people that our universities are producing.

Since 2009, the marginal effective tax rate on new business investment has been cut in half, placing Ontario below the average marginal effective tax rate among OECD countries, and well below the marginal effective tax rate in the United States, which, as I said earlier, gives us a sustainable competitive advantage here in the province of Ontario.

Along with my colleague in Parkdale-High Park, we had the opportunity a few weeks ago of being in the US

Midwest for a conference. It was very instructive to talk with a lot of our counterparts at the state levels.

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The States, by and large, are pretty well managed. A lot of them have some major concerns over what's happening in both Houses of Congress. But the States look at the province of Ontario, and they look upon us with some envy. We are the elephant in the room. We have a larger population and larger GDP than any of the surrounding states in the industrialized heartland of North America. There's enough credit to go around, and a lot of these measures have been supported by all three parties. I hope this one will be as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I just want to say that this Thursday coming up, the Legiskaters have our first hockey game against the firefighters, and I know the fine member from Mississauga—Streetsville is going to be stellar between the pipes for us again. We'll keep that undefeated record intact.

I listened with intent and interest as to what the member from Mississauga—Streetsville was referring to in talking about interest, taxation etc. We can honestly say—on this side of the chamber, anyways—that this Liberal government for the last 10 years has actually done a marvellous job of overtaxing and overburdening small businesses with red tape and actually stifling economic growth and advancement for small businesses.

It's unfortunate because when I travelled throughout my great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West and I approached small business owners and entrepreneurs like I did this past week back in the riding—I went to Frenchies restaurant on Division Street in Cobourg. It's a great little restaurant. You can get Montreal smoked ham on rye, and the proprietor there, Frenchie, she's a firecracker—

Mr. Peter Shurman: It's not smoked ham, it's smoked meat.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Smoked meat, sorry. Smoked meat.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Very important.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Yes, very important. Yes, I apologize. I'm being corrected here.

Frenchie, she's a real firecracker. She started up her own business—a restaurant, of course—and it's hard to open up a restaurant and be successful, but she's done it. One of the things that she was bending my ear about was the fact that government regulation and overregulation and paper forms are hindering her ability to expand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really happy to be able to stand in the House and speak about the Concession Street BIA, which is in my riding, and the wonderful work that they do as a business organization.

Just this weekend, I visited FallFest, which is run by the Concession Street BIA, and it brings small businesses together in the community. It gets everybody out. Un-

fortunately, Mother Nature didn't go quite along with it this year, but there were still businesses from up and down the street. It was to my good fortune that I met one of our new business owners on the street, Mr. Robert Connelly, and his photography studio. He was really great to do a photo shoot yesterday with myself and my family. I'm hoping to get some great shots for our Christmas card this year.

I'd also like to take the opportunity to welcome our new executive director for the Concession Street BIA, which is Kim Pinczel. I know she's going to do a wonderful job of bringing new light to Concession Street, hopefully bringing new business, fresh eyes and a new way to do business on this street.

I'll take a moment to say thank you to Betty Toplack, who is one of our business owners on the street. For 37 years she's had the Mountain Bookstore. Unfortunately, come the end of this month, she will be closing down her store and leaving Concession Street. With hydro rates the way they just keep increasing and red tape on a regular basis, Betty is just finding it absolutely impossible to keep her small business going. But I wish her the best of luck as she decides to take that business into the Internet world and hopefully be able to do well there.

We have great, great businesses on Concession Street: Linseed's, Opie's, Papa Leo's, so many electronics places and Middle Eastern cuisine. We have a wonderful place, and I invite all to join.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. I enjoyed the delivery, with all the factual information, from the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. There is no question that Ontario is one of the best jurisdictions, certainly in North America, to do business. Taxes in recent years have been reduced, and we understand that small businesses—that's where our employment comes from, and we have to encourage them all the way.

I was at a special event yesterday. Orléans celebrated their 150th anniversary some two years ago. That's my community—120,000 now. When I was a kid coming through there to high school, it was about 1,500 people. So it's a big growth area of Ottawa. It's right on the Ottawa River. This summer, all of the businesses and community groups got together and we celebrated the 400th anniversary of Champlain making his way up the Ottawa River past Orléans. June 8, I believe, was the date. That was one of the things where the businessmen got together, really supported the community and made the event much better.

Yesterday, we were celebrating Orléans in the 1950s and 1960s. We had a lot of pictures of Orléans businesses—Montpetit store; Dr. Major was there for 30 or 40 years, looking after the people in Orléans. We had these wonderful slides from those times. We had wonderful stories from those times. It was a 95% francophone community, but the McNeely families were given one of the notations. We had a horse business at that time.

Businesses are so important. This bill is good for business, and I hope the whole Legislature supports it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a pleasure to bring my constituents' thoughts to the Legislature. I'll echo my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte West: We really do hope that Mr. Delaney is good between the pipes on Thursday night when we play the firefighters—and also our colleague from Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, who was stellar the last time, Jimmy McDonnell.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: He stood on his head.

Mr. Bill Walker: He stood on his head, and we're hoping for that again. It's going to be a great night.

It can't be said too many times in this House. I know the member from Mississauga—Streetsville was talking about corporate tax cuts and trying to compare us with the States. You know what? What we need to be focusing on is exactly what we're doing here in Ontario. We should be the leader in this province again, and we will be. Enough is enough. We're going to turn this province around when we take government. We're going to get out of this business of continually taxing, adding administration, adding bureaucracy and adding frustration.

One of the members across, earlier today, insinuated that I was a person who was looking at the negative. Well, you know what? They painted a pretty bleak picture across the aisle, and I consider myself the eternal optimist. However, when you look at the fiascos that they've created and the small businesses they've run out of here—the abattoirs, the small pharmacists, the small businessmen of all facts and areas—it just scares me.

We need to have hope. What we need is a government that will stop spending \$9 billion more than they bring in in revenue each year. They need to be creating conditions in an economy so that small businesses actually want to step up and say, "You're absolutely right. I want to stay in Ontario. I want to come to Ontario."

I want to see a jobs plan. I want to see less taxes. I want to see less red tape. I want to see taxes that are decreasing, not increasing. We don't want to see, every time we turn around, them coming into my back pocket to fix their ills, their mismanagement and their bad decisions. We need a government that inspires and provides hope, like we will, to show them. We've offered; our leader offered them all of our white papers, if they could even take one good idea and try to run it up the flagpole.

Mr. Speaker, small business is the backbone. We're here to promote it, and we'll be with them every step of the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. I return to the member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's a pleasure to hear the comments of my colleagues. To my colleague from Northumberland—Quinte West, I assure you I am going to pack several weeks of miracles, goalposts and crossbars in my bag for Thursday. But I often wonder how he can call our

efforts anything but effective when taxes have been steadily going down and red tape has been slashed every year. You should actually have a look at that.

To my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, Hamilton's businesses deserve a great deal of credit for the stellar job that they've done in Hamilton's commercial and industrial renaissance in the last decade. The nature of the work that we do in our society evolves, and Hamilton's businesses know that they're going to be doing different things for different buyers and different customers in the year ahead.

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To my colleague from Ottawa—Orléans, Ottawa's eastern neighbourhoods, such as the one that he calls home, have created a real centre of innovation and new products and services, even while they celebrate their traditions and their roots. They've really made it a place to be proud to be from and a place to be proud to live in.

Of course, to my colleague from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Speaker, I trust this member's comments indicate that he intends to back-check and block shots on the ice this Thursday—

Mr. Bill Walker: I'll be there for you, buddy.

Mr. Bob Delaney: —and I'm going to hold him to it.

I also say to the member and to some of his colleagues to go into the library and check out the May-June 2013 edition of a magazine—published in the United States, by the way—called *Foreign Affairs*. It's all about what's in their white papers. It's all about the policy of austerity.

What the article says—an American publication—is, "Austerity doesn't work," and every jurisdiction that has tried the ideas in their white papers has failed and come out with more debt and not less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand today to speak to Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act.

Just for the benefit of the folks who are just tuning in, this is an act that proposes to increase the exemption for the employer health tax, starting January 1, 2014, and ending in 2018. In 2019, the exemption would then be adjusted for inflation every five years.

Bill 105 would increase the exemption limit for the employer health tax for small businesses, charities and not-for-profit organizations with an annual payroll of \$400,000 to \$500,000, respectively. This indeed will alleviate the burden that payroll taxes have on small enterprises and their ability to grow and create jobs.

According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, this legislation will also result in more than 60,000 employers paying less employer health tax, and 12,000 of those businesses would no longer pay the tax at all. That's why the PC caucus is intrigued by this particular bill and has chosen to support it in second reading.

Again, this bill is called An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, but I would be remiss if I didn't reflect back on comments that my colleague from Nipissing shared on Monday, October 7. My colleague from North Bay said, "It would be more aptly named the

'supporting small business while we stick it to them 100 other ways act.'"

That's what I want to reflect upon in my next few minutes, as I stand and debate this particular bill. But before I do so, I'd be remiss if I didn't recognize that, appropriately enough, as we talk about supporting small business, this is indeed Small Business Week in Canada, from October 20 to October 26. It's a national celebration of Canadian entrepreneurs and their contribution to Canada's economy. This event has recognized Canadian entrepreneurs for the last 34 years.

While we celebrate small business, a recent report conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business delivers some surprising news. The report found that Saskatoon and the greater Calgary area are once again the best large Canadian communities for entrepreneurs to run a business in. The GTHA came in third, a fact that, sadly, speaks for itself.

It is evident that there is excessive red tape that is strangling business in Ontario, and we're going to talk on that in a couple of minutes. This government, the Wynne Liberal government, must work hard to reduce this. Talking about it and having conversations and consulting just doesn't cut it. There's still so much more work to be done, because third place for what was once the economic engine of Canada is just not good enough.

With that said, I'd also like to note that the Canadian Federation of Independent Business also noted that small business optimism in Ontario obviously dropped in September. Employers are worried about many other factors, including red tape, skyrocketing electricity costs, and being hit by new fees and taxes to pay for public infrastructure projects.

Just last night, before I left to come to Toronto, a constituent, a small business owner, came to my home. He's worried. His son—he has two sons, actually, who work for the business. He has one son in particular who hopes to take over the business someday. But he worries about the escalating red tape that is burying the basis of his business. He is a director on OASIS, and they meet in a couple of weeks, on October 31, in Waterloo. One of the keynote issues that is going to be addressed during this OASIS convention is the skyrocketing amount of red tape. They have to hire consultants to complete this red tape regimen, and that's absolutely ludicrous for a small business that employs 10 people. That's good news for a small community like Teeswater, and here he is being burdened with the cost of complying with redundant, unnecessary red tape. So we have to take a look at that.

Small business owners are listening to the Premier's discussion about revenue tools, and you know what? They're beginning to wonder if the Liberal government is going to give them this employer health tax relief with one hand and then claw back any gains through new taxes with another. A leopard doesn't change its spots. I think that, just like in the movie *Groundhog Day*, we're going to see the same thing happen over and over and over. They take with one hand and give with another.

But I'm always impressed with the tenacity and the dedication of small business owners in my riding, and

they will persevere. You cannot find more industrious and innovative people who are willing to take a risk and invest in their community. These are the people who advertise in our local papers and sponsor sports teams and charitable events. Most importantly, small business owners create jobs. Given that small firms with less than 100 employees make up about 98% of the total employer business base in Ontario, I think it would be safe to say that they are a baseload power of our economy. We cannot forget that. If we hamstring small business with excessive fees and regulation, we choke the engine that, as I said, drives this province.

In my meetings with small business owners in Huron-Bruce, they expressed concern about Ontario's debt levels and the fact that this government does not seem to have any plan to lead us out of debt bondage. When we have to spend a large percentage of our tax dollars to service the debt, not to mention what will happen if our credit rating is downgraded again or interest rates go up, it's very difficult to grow our economy. Our productive capital is being drained away to pay interest on the debt, and yet the government continues down the path of spend and spend. It has to stop, Speaker. Business owners understand the bottom line, and they see through this government very easily. You cannot continue to spend more than you take in, and at a certain point the debt has to be paid. The citizens of Detroit have just learned that lesson the hard way. When money is wasted on poorly administered programs and giving \$7-million bonuses to executives for simply doing the job that they are well paid to do, there's nothing left to support the core programs that are vital to a healthy economy.

I'd like to talk about infrastructure now. All over my riding, municipalities are facing the closure of bridges and roads because they no longer have the money to maintain them. I was at the Bruce county wardens' banquet on Saturday evening. A former warden came up to me and said, "Lisa, mark my words: The bridges that are going to have to be closed this year because of the lack of infrastructure dollars are indeed going to be a political issue next campaign." I believe him.

Small businesses depend on public infrastructure to access markets and supplies. How many bridges could we have saved with the \$7-million bonus the Liberal government is paying to Pan Am Games executives? I would like to suggest that we could have repaired a significant number of roads with the money wasted on the gas plant cancellations. Just think of what we could do if we were not spending so much to service Ontario's crushing debt. We have reached a crisis point in this province. The financial cushion is gone, and we have to make every dollar count. But somehow, that whole point is missed on the Liberal government.

Now I'd like to touch a little bit on the TSSA. This is something that rings very, very clear and is of importance to small businesses around my riding and all over the province, actually. They raise the same concerns repeatedly with regard to the TSSA. While this legislation begins to address the payroll tax burden—Bill 105, spe-

cifically, that is—it leaves other significant problems unaddressed. Only Friday, I received an email from another frustrated small business owner in Huron–Bruce. This gentleman, along with many other farmers, is facing significant fees from the TSSA with regard to on-farm crop drying. Ontario dealers are facing higher costs to have their burners certified than their counterparts in the US. If these units are already deemed acceptable in other provinces and the US, why on earth do we need to burden our grain dealers with these crippling fees and destroy their ability to compete?

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That's the crux of it all, Mr. Speaker. This Liberal government is doing whatever they can to defeat the competitiveness of our province. Our businesses and our province are going to hurt as a result. To talk about the TSSA a little bit more, the cost associated with having just one burner certified has been well over \$3,000. When margins are tight and dollars are sparse, most people don't have that extra \$3,000, and couple that with the fact that most dealers have multiple burners. Where are they going to find this extra cash?

I've also heard from small business owners who sell propane. They are very clear that TSSA fees and inspections will force small dealers out of business. This is a blow to regions that depend upon tourism as an economic driver. Providing services and goods to campers and cottagers is a major source of income to many businesses in Ontario. Given that Huron–Bruce is Ontario's west coast, we enjoy our tourism. We want to provide the most cost-effective services available. Unfortunately, again, this is another way that the Liberal government is taking a whack at rural Ontario. We need to cut as much of the red tape and endless fees that burden our small employers and create an environment in which they can focus their energies on growing their business and creating jobs.

Speaker, red tape has been called the \$31-billion hidden tax. Ontario needs to cap inspection fees and bring those fees in line with similar private sector services. We must also ensure that TSSA employees are qualified to perform these inspections and that the TSSA publishes its standards and safety policies so that business owners know what standards their establishments have to meet. These frequent inspections and fees are creating a lot of stress in the business community, and take time and productive capital away from what the employer should be doing: successfully running his or her business.

Let's talk about WSIB. It's another bone of contention with small businesses across the province. While Bill 105 is a step in the right direction, it's like we're taking one step forward and 10 back. The Liberal government has increased the burden on many small businesses with Bill 119, which took away a WSIB exemption allowing contractors to substitute private insurance for WSIB coverage. Bill 119 forces independent operators, sole proprietors, partners in a partnership and executive officers of corporations in the construction industry to pay Workplace Safety and Insurance Board premiums. If

there was anything more ludicrous introduced by this government, I'd be hard-pressed to find something to beat this particular one. There is a lot of nonsense that has been introduced over the last 10 years, but I can tell you—in 2010, my husband and I renovated our farmhouse and, at that time, going into 2011, it came to our contractor's attention that his wife, who works out of their home and does the books for the company, was going to have to pay WSIB. This is an added burden which is absolutely unnecessary.

We have to start being real. We need a reality check with this government because, as I said, they are crippling small business left, right and centre. There are so many different examples from my riding that we could focus on, but I just want to say that my offices receive many calls—and this is on which I'm basing my comments today—and specifically about WSIB, the calls are coming in with regard to mandatory coverage, because it won't do a thing to improve workplace safety and it will increase costs for the average effective business by several thousand dollars a year. This mandatory WSIB coverage is a tax on job creators and drives up the costs of small businesses and contractors. It's just absolute nonsense and a perfect example of another way this Liberal government continues to prove they're totally disconnected from reality and they're doing nothing but pushing small businesses further and further down the road in terms of the burden of debt that they have to carry.

All of these extra costs are being levied on the small businesses that I've mentioned and will eventually be passed on to the consumers.

It's interesting. With regard to transportation regulations and farmers, they have no one to pass the extra costs of business along to. It stops there. I hear this government talk about how they want to embrace everyone. They're the only party that stands up for one Ontario. But I challenge that, because I think they are talking out of both sides of their mouth. On one hand, they talk about embracing and introducing legislation for one Ontario. On the flip side, they're doing nothing but crippling so many sectors throughout this province. That proves that they're not walking their talk, and they have to be held accountable for this.

The cumulative effect of all of these extra costs and red tape is a drain to precious resources from our producers and job creators. Slowly, our economy is being starved. Treating our small businesses as bottomless sources of revenue is no way to regrow Ontario's economy. In fact, it is a recipe for an eventual economic collapse. If these small business owners throw in the towel and either close or move to a more business-friendly environment, like what has happened in Huron–Bruce—Volvo, E.D. Smith; the list could go on and on—jobs dry up and disappear, and then the people disappear.

We already have a high rate of unemployment in this province. High unemployment takes a toll on our social programs, which places an even bigger burden on the remaining taxpayers. Food bank usage is rising across the

province and people are depending more and more on agencies like the United Way to make ends meet.

I referenced in a question I asked to the Premier this morning the fact that people are finding it very difficult to make ends meet. They're finding it difficult to pay their ever-increasing utilities, their hydro bills. You know what the sad part is? There are some agencies that are available to help, but when you call them now, the voice-mail answer that they get tells them that the cupboard is bare. There's no money left this year to help anybody out, and that is a travesty for what once was the economic engine of Canada, as I've mentioned before.

If Ontario is to once again prosper, we cannot drive independent school bus companies out with unfair procurement practices, another example where this Liberal government proves time and time again they just don't get it. We can no longer afford arbitrary decisions like the one to end slots at racetracks, which may end up costing 60,000 jobs, as we heard earlier today as well. I'd be remiss if I didn't touch on the fact that the closure of government facilities like the Walkerton jail and the Bluewater centre have taken a terrible toll on both the employees and the local economies in Huron-Bruce. How do we recoup those jobs? Where is the government's plan to put these people back to work? Alas, when we asked those questions this morning of the Premier, we did not get an answer. This Liberal government just doesn't have a plan to get Ontarians back to work, and that is a worry.

Where are we going to turn? Ad hoc decisions from a government that can provide no rationale or economic justification are undermining the very fabric of our society. Time and time again, just like this bill, Bill 105, it shows this government playing on the fringes of a fabric that is unravelling at a scary rate. How many entrepreneurs have been discouraged from starting a business after witnessing the outrageous tire stewardship fees, another example? Tire stewardship fees arbitrarily levied on farm tires have put our farmers and equipment dealers at a huge disadvantage. Several tradesmen contacted my office after the introduction of the College of Trades and informed me that they plan to retire rather than pay the higher fees.

Enough is enough. I appeal to the Liberal government, to Premier Wynne, to stop the nonsense and start working with us in the spirit of minority government and hear what we're saying. Let us work with you. Take a look at our white papers and take some things from them. How many jobs and apprenticeships do we have to lose?

I want to talk about the agri-businesses as well. Farm organizations have been clear in their message to government: Increasing amounts of red tape and paperwork are causing stress.

That reminds me, Mr. Speaker. It was interesting. Last week during constituency week, I got contacted by some of my local editors of community papers. A member from the Liberal caucus wrote a letter saying that I voted against Ontario's Great Lakes. Well, guess what? We as a caucus, the PC Party, chose to vote against the Great

Lakes Protection Act because it's bad legislation. It's just redundant and it adds another layer.

1550

Interestingly enough, the president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, at the Huron County Federation of Agriculture AGM on Friday night, also denounced that piece of legislation. The president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture said very clearly it—he agreed with us.

Just like the Green Energy Act took all rights away from municipalities, the Great Lakes Protection Act, if you read it thoroughly, trumps our nutrient management program. It trumps source water protection. It's bad legislation.

Yet this government continues to throw things at us left, right and centre that don't make any sense, and they need to be jacked up because of that.

I could go on about energy, and there's so much that needs to be said about that. Energy rates alone continue to be hiked through the roof, driving our businesses out; an example would be Bogdon furniture out of Walkerton. Again, they showed me their energy bills—and guess what? Walkerton is a beautiful community in which I have family. They're very proud of their community and of their manufacturers. But when their hydro bill is actually 50% more because of global adjustment, they scratch their heads a little bit and wonder, "Why on earth do we continue to try to prevail in Ontario?" Do you know why they do it? They do it because of their community, and they're committed to their employees. I wish we had a government in Ontario that were equally as committed to our employees in Ontario.

Speaker, we've got a long way to go with this bill, and I look forward to further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: It was indeed a pleasure to listen to the member from Huron-Bruce. I sometimes had to stop and wonder what the debate was about, but she was very articulate. I know what the bill says. The bill is about \$450,000 and—that's what the bill is about, and it's about helping small businesses to get a little bit of extra money.

She went on to talk about so many things, and I was scratching my head, trying to figure out why she wasn't talking about the bill so much as about all the errors that this government is making. It must be a very easy speech for her to make because the government has made a lot of errors recently.

Then I looked at the bill itself, Bill 105. It does a very small thing around taxes. It does a very small thing about companies that have under \$5 million in sales a year. It's very narrowly focused. But it has this title of Supporting Small Businesses Act. Then I figured this was why she was standing up, talking about small business. I don't blame her for being somewhat confused. The government should be bringing in a bill that says "We're separating small business from big business and we're giving them a tax break act," because the reality is, that's what it's all about.

I listened to her and I agreed with her that small businesses are the backbone of the economy. I listened to her and I agreed with her that the work ethic in many small businesses surpasses that of large businesses or even public enterprise. I listened to her and heard that they are job producers in this province—all of which is correct. But most of the time she spent talking about Liberal mismanagement and how the government plays on the fringes.

I would remind her and everyone here that what this bill does is very small. It's very much on the edge, and we should get on and pass it to help those small businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Huron-Bruce for her comments.

Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, is another piece, I would say, in a very long list of significant tax reforms when it comes to enhancing and supporting small business across Ontario.

Two weeks ago, I had an opportunity to speak for about 10 minutes—I shared some time with the member from Oakville—and during that 10 minutes, I gave several examples of the support over the course of several years, new policy pieces that we have brought in that have enhanced significantly and supported small business in the province of Ontario.

I would say to the member from Huron-Bruce, as the official opposition and as a Conservative official opposition, I think in terms of cementing the idea that Conservatives like to put forward that they are the tax fighters, that they are the ones who will look after your pocket-book, to be fair, there was a real missed opportunity by the Conservatives several years ago on a policy position they supported, up until we brought it forward and did the heavy lifting on it. But when we brought it into the Legislature and voted on it, they did not support it. That, of course, was the single sales tax. There's likely not one tax initiative that could have been brought forward that would have helped all businesses, large, medium-sized and small. That single sales tax initiative, by the way, when we talk about red tape, was the single biggest thing you could have done to support the reduction of red tape. Not only was there no support from the official opposition on the input cost savings for businesses, but there was no support from the members of the official opposition on the elimination of 1,000 pages of red tape almost overnight. So I'm a little curious. Perhaps in her response she'll have an ability to comment on that.

Speaker, my two minutes are up, but I would simply say this piece is not the only piece. This is a long list of significant tax reforms for small business in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure to listen to the member from Huron-Bruce put things so eloquently and with such passion. She does represent her riding with great distinction, and I want to thank her for that.

Again, Bill 105 really needs to be worked on: some of the things we see in the bill and, of course, the over-taxation by the Liberals. I'll give you a perfect example of that. I recently purchased two new front tires, so the smaller tires, for my tractor. I was expecting to pay \$300 per tire, maybe \$400 a tire. It ends up that \$1,600 later I have two new tires on the front of my tractor—\$1,600, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Bill Walker: That would have been the year the Liberals put that tax in.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: This tire tax that the Liberals have brought in does nothing for small businesses. Going back to the small business where I purchased the tires for my tractor, the proprietor there said to me, "Well, you know, Rob, one of the problems that we're facing is overregulation and over-taxation." They're having difficulty keeping those tires for rural farmers or for light industrial workers who use tractors for excavating or any kind of landscaping they might be doing. It's really become a hindrance, stifling business for these small businesses, and it's just sad to see that this once great province has now lapsed into a have-not province under this Liberal government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's an honour to rise on behalf of the people in Algoma-Manitoulin and just address this particular bill real shortly.

The member from Huron-Bruce brought up a really good point that is very sensitive to me along the North Shore. Over the last week that I spent doing constituency clinics in many of the communities in the northern part of my riding, the one item that consistently came up was the problem with TSSA and the impact it's having on small businesses. It's not that these small, community-oriented businesses, which are the backbone of these communities, are looking to get any more or anything less. They're not looking to get any breaks. They want to abide by the law. But you have to respect the fact that the inspection fees, the regulations, a lot of the orders that are put on these small mom-and-pop operations—they just can't meet what the inspections from TSSA are requesting of them. The time limits that are put on them and the availability of that specialized service that is needed across northern Ontario is not readily available as it is in other parts of this province. That is just one of the areas that is really being affected.

I really enjoyed listening to the comments that the member from Huron-Bruce made on TSSA. I'm really going to look at the points you brought up. Maybe they might be useful to me just to highlight and have some discussions with the people back home.

1600

But another point that I just wanted to bring up is there's good news that happened in Algoma-Manitoulin. There are quite a few new manufacturing jobs that are going to come to the area. But just the one that I want to highlight in the last eight seconds that I have is, we had 100 jobs at stake here, and it took this government six

weeks to authorize having the power opened up to the sawmill in order to gain 100 jobs. Now, if we're going to do something, why does it take so long to plug in in order to create jobs? That's where we need some help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly do appreciate the comments from the members from Beaches–East York, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Northumberland–Quinte West and Algoma–Manitoulin.

It's easy to time and time again point out Liberal mismanagement—it's almost too easy, Mr. Speaker—but the bottom line to all of it is that the band-aid approach that this government has tried is just not working any longer.

I found it interesting that the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan referenced the fact that Bill 105 is just one of many in a string of tax relief. Well, I can't help but shake my head because clearly, as I stated in my earlier comments, a leopard does not change its spots, and the reality is they're going to take from one hand—they're going to take from Paul to give to Peter and keep spinning around. What we need is just an absolute commitment instead of passing the bowl around. We need to stop, and start eliminating the red tape that this government has introduced over the last 10 years.

I thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. What a perfect example you shared with regard to the tire tax—absolute nonsense and cost for yourself and the business in which you purchased the tires from. I'd be curious to know if anybody really knew how big those front tires were, because it's ridiculous what they've done in terms of escalating the pressure of doing business. The Liberals just go at it over and over again.

In terms of adding pressure to doing business, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin was very, very interesting. I appreciate the fact that you're interested in my comments from TSSA. They're very real. This is what I'm hearing in my riding, and the interesting part is that those comments are universal across this province. It's great that you get it and that the PC caucus gets it. I just wish the Liberal government would catch up and get along with us as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to address G105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

I just wanted to say that we just finished Oktoberfest in Kitchener–Waterloo. I'm going on my diet now. But actually, small businesses were worked into the theme of Oktoberfest. It's quite something. We had something called Techtobertfest. This was a local company, Communtech. It's not small exactly, but what it was doing was fostering the start-up connection across the province for young entrepreneurs who have these great ideas and would benefit, at some point, from some of the recommendations from G105.

I just want to quickly, though, review some of the background here, because it's important to know why we're actually standing up in the House today talking about something that potentially could be very positive, which I find a little encouraging given some of the debates that we've had in the past.

We're going to probably approach it from a very different perspective as the PC caucus, and that's actually becoming a trend, a trend that I might say is resonating quite well with the people of the province of Ontario based on some of those by-election results.

Just to review, currently, there is an exemption for paying the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 in an employer's payroll. This applies to a business with one employee and to the Royal Bank. The NDP has long argued that while the exemption is appropriate for small companies, there is no reason to have the first \$400,000 in a large employer's payroll exempted from the EHT. Therefore, one of our budget demands was to have companies with \$5 million in payroll or more no longer be eligible for the exemption, and this is included in the legislation.

The government has also increased, though, the exemption amount to \$450,000 for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years. Starting in 2019, the exemption amount is adjusted for inflation every five years.

Unfortunately, this will undermine some of the good intentions that we brought to that budget discussion. I'm sure some of you will remember that budget debate quite clearly. We brought a number of requests into that discourse, and, unfortunately—we'll try to make this better when it gets to committee. Of course, we're going to be supporting it, because it was one of our ideas.

We do have some specific concerns with the bill, though. By increasing the amount of the exemption, as I said, from \$400,000 to \$450,000, the new threshold doesn't raise any new revenue. I think all of us in this House should be able to come to some consensus that new revenue is needed and that we need to find creative ways to find that revenue which doesn't land on the backs of hard-working Ontarians.

The government also must be sure that it has closed off all possible ways of segmenting the workforce for payroll reporting purposes, which has been a problem in the past. This is where we will sort of dig down at the committee level to address some of these concerns.

This bill in this House at this time also provides us an opportunity to have a broader, perhaps more honest, conversation about taxation in the province of Ontario. There is a range of other tax loopholes that could be changed and, perhaps, should be considered for changing. As I mentioned, we are not going to cut our way to prosperity in the province of Ontario, as the PCs would suggest, and we cannot continue on the same path that we are on as a province, with overspending in other areas and wasting other tax revenue at the expense of the people who we serve.

The other tax loopholes that could be changed—the Liberals, of course, claim that the provincial government

needs to hit household budgets with new taxes to raise that \$34 billion for transit infrastructure by 2013. Yet at the same time, the Liberal government has committed to a series of new corporate tax loopholes and giveaways to Ontario's largest corporations and highest-income earners that will cost Ontario's treasury over \$35 billion by the year 2031. This does not resonate well with the people of this province, and nor should it.

Beginning in 2015, the government will open \$1 billion in corporate tax loopholes that will give Ontario's largest corporations an HST rebate on expenses like high-priced restaurants and box seats. This needs to change. We are going to fight this, obviously, because this does not put people first. Hard-working Ontarians have to pay their taxes when they go out to eat, if they go out to eat. Why should corporations not have to pay this tax?

Beginning in 2018, planned cuts in corporate tax rates from 11.5% to 10% will cost the treasury \$800 million per year. Quite honestly, when we have met with Canadian manufacturers and Ontario manufacturers, they're not actively lobbying for a reduction in their corporate tax rates because they understand. Progressive companies understand that when the taxes are collected—and corporations have a responsibility to pay those taxes—and we invest that money in progressive ways and efficient ways, for instance, in infrastructure, we actually make their companies more profitable. Infrastructure is a key piece of being successful in the province of Ontario.

Finally, beginning in 2018, the planned tax cuts only for individuals earning over \$500,000 per year, at a cost of \$470 million per year, are to be clawed back. Of course, this was one of our 2011 budget items and actually has generated \$470 million.

The total cost of new loopholes and giveaways comes to \$35 billion. The number is so big that it doesn't even resonate with your average Ontarian. It's just a lot of money that needs to actually go to the services and to the people of this province. That's why we're here. We are here to strengthen the very fabric of this province. That means a strong education system. That means a strong health care system where people don't have to go out of province to get certain medical procedures.

That also means preserving the environment. We've seen a lot of cutbacks around the Ministry of Natural Resources. Certainly, some of those tax dollars that we're proposing to give away to corporations in corporate tax breaks could go towards strengthening the Ministry of Labour.

1610

We had a very tragic event in the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo just over a week ago, where a young man was on a work site and suffered a fatal accident. That work site actually now has 17 work stoppages on it. You can't tell me that the Ministry of Labour had their eye on that location. We're going to delve down and find out more information about that, but when you protect workers, you protect the economy. These are the kinds of services that \$35 billion goes to, not to mention infrastructure.

For my comments today I'm going to focus primarily on corporate tax compliance, because we are not doing a good job of making sure that we are gathering and collecting the revenue from corporations. Even the Auditor General has said this for years. Don Drummond was commissioned—he wasn't exactly listened to, but he was commissioned—to make some recommendations on corporate tax compliance. He, among many other commentators, has pointed to a number of problems with Ontario's tax collection system. I would have thought that perhaps that might have been the focus of some of the other speakers, but this is going to be my focus today, because corporations are getting opportunities in this great province, and quite honestly, they should be paying their taxes as well.

The greatest challenge to the province relates to the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payments of provincial corporate income tax through creative mechanisms, including the shifting of profits and losses across Canada to avoid or reduce taxation in the province where income really was earned—which is where it's supposed to be taxed. Currently, corporate groups can use complex transactions to transfer losses among subsidiaries and across provincial borders. These transactions can also be used by corporate groups to shift income from Ontario to lower-tax jurisdictions than Ontario, even though the corporation benefits from the public services in Ontario.

I was just reading from the Calgary Herald this last spring. It's an article entitled, "Alberta Loses Battle for \$120 million in Corporate Taxes." This is now becoming known as the "Ontario shuffle"—there's actually a name for this. The Ontario shuffle lets firms pay less tax elsewhere. Companies that are benefiting from the infrastructure, from the economy in that province and in this province: If they have their headquarters someplace else, there are all sorts of loopholes for them to get away with not paying their fair share.

That's actually all that we're asking for: for corporations to show a level of leadership and become part of the solution, because I think most of them would say that government can't do it alone, and I think most of us in this House would agree that government cannot do it alone.

These are some of the issues that we are certainly going to be pursuing around corporate tax compliance.

In addition, corporate groups can use aggressive international tax planning strategies to shift profits earned in Ontario to foreign-based subsidiaries, thereby avoiding the Ontario corporate income tax altogether. Surely this is something that we can find some consensus on. For a long time, in the traditional sense, Conservatives have said, "Everybody has to pay their fair share, including corporations." Corporations need to pay their fair share as well. Actually, we have the ability to significantly strengthen this piece of legislation to ensure that tax revenues come into this House and are spent appropriately now that we have the Financial Accountability Office. We can make sure, and we can actually give some assur-

ances to those corporations, that the money that comes into this place is actually going to be allocated in a fiscally responsible manner. That was one of the reasons that we pursued the Financial Accountability Office with such voracity. Clearly, there was a trust issue. We addressed that trust issue by making sure that the Financial Accountability Office was a condition of our support of the budget. I think—actually, I know at the door for a fact—that it resonates quite well.

Most of these later practices around tax avoidance relate to a federally and provincially defined corporate tax base. The 2012 federal budget, as an example, went at least partway towards curtailing practices by foreign-controlled Canadian corporations with the introduction of foreign affiliate dumping rules. That sounds nice, eh? There's a name for it: foreign affiliate dumping rules. These were dealt with in Bill C45, the fall budget. These rules were introduced in response to the report by the Advisory Panel on Canada's System of International Taxation, which characterized certain dumping transactions as abusive. I don't know if it would take another panel or another advisory board to actually find that that would be abusive. On the surface, it does strike one rational individual as being an abusive technique or mechanism of the tax structure, as it's written. All of these activities can unduly reduce provincial corporate tax revenue.

When Mr. Drummond came out with his report, he made a couple of key recommendations. I would just like to remind the government of some of those recommendations: that the province “work with the federal government to address aggressive interprovincial and international” corporate “tax avoidance activities by”—this is not something that we just woke up and realized was happening last year; there is a systemic practice of avoiding paying taxes—“undertaking additional data review and research to identify activities of particular concern to Ontario;

“Entering into an agreement with the Canada Revenue Agency to invest resources in additional compliance efforts; and

“Implementing additional reporting requirements that disclose activities that cause income and losses to be allocated to a province where the underlying economic activity was minimal or did not occur.”

Finally, ensuring that companies that take advantage of loans, of grants, of write-offs and other Ontario corporate tax breaks on the assumption that they will undertake certain activities, such as job creation, new plant and machinery purchases, research and development etc., actually perform those activities in Ontario.

These requests are not out of the range of reasonable. If the government is going to say to corporations, “We want you to be part of the solution for our economy. We want you to come to this province. Try to ignore the hydro rates for now; we're working on that”—but if you are going to benefit from having a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with the government of the day, then you should, in turn, deliver on those promises. If

you are getting those tax breaks, then we want you to create those jobs. We want you to invest in that capital. We want you to invest in research and development, because the connection between R&D and innovative economies is indisputable. We know this. Even government knows this. We know this. And we know that corporations are sitting on a lot of money. We know. In fact, the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, refers to it as dead money. This should be a shared concern that we all have—all parties.

Drummond also recommended that Ontario collaborate with the federal government and other provinces to investigate options to tax corporations on a consolidated basis, with the purpose of ensuring a fair allocation of losses and income across Canada. By pursuing these steps, Drummond estimates that Ontario could raise up to \$200 million per year when fully phased in and \$50 million in year one. That said, it would take years to implement the many rules and administrative procedures needed to clean all this up, so the implications for the Ontario revenue base are very long-term.

You know, there is a lot of red tape for small businesses. I was sitting down with some of these young entrepreneurs last week at Oktoberfest, and they're ambitious. They want to start their own company. They're creative. They're absolutely inspirational, actually. As someone who comes back to this place and who represents their interests, I think it's incumbent on us to actually create a piece of legislation which will benefit their lives. It's incredible. A lot of young people are starting their own sort of start-ups because they can't find jobs. It's really like the next best option. Thank goodness that they have that drive and that energy to go that route. And thank goodness that there are angel networks and local, innovative sort of—what am I looking for?—investors to ensure that they have a chance. But as a government, we certainly should be more supportive of those start-ups, and I'm hoping, based on our youth employment strategy that we also made as part of a condition of our support of the last budget, that we address the high youth unemployment rate in Ontario—one of the highest in Canada—and that we address some of the need for investment in R&D and capital funding so that we are actually creating the conditions for our economy to thrive and to grow.

1620

This piece of legislation—I mean, I've been very clear about some of our concerns. I think that there should be some common consensus that we can find around corporate taxation, that people pay their taxes. I certainly think that it may take some time for us to put those mechanisms in place, but now that we have the Financial Accountability Office in place, we can actually make sure (1) that they will work, and (2) that that revenue will come into this place and once it does come into this place, it is spent appropriately.

We have a fundamentally different approach than the PCs. We, of course, wanted this exemption in place. It was a condition of our budget support, just like home

care, just like auto insurance and just like the Financial Accountability Office. We're going to continue to hold the government accountable because we see that as one of our core responsibilities as the third party. We have fought the good fight on some of the issues where we just cannot agree with the government or the PCs. A special interest group like EllisDon coming into this place and getting a special deal and a fast-track piece of legislation doesn't make sense. I know it doesn't make sense to everybody on the other side of the aisle. It's a nonstarter for us. But on issues like supporting small businesses and creating conditions for this economy to come back, we can work with you. We want to work with you. I think I heard that from the PC caucus earlier, although they have said no, consistently, for almost two years. We've said yes where we can and we've said yes when we know that we can make a piece of legislation stronger, because we actually see that as our responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, it's been a pleasure to address some of the concerns with G105. I think that we can do a lot more for small businesses in the province of Ontario. New Democrats are committed to it, and we look forward to this piece getting to committee where we can make it stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The member for Kitchener–Waterloo offered what I thought were some very thoughtful comments on the bill, for which I'd like to thank her. I don't agree with all of them. There are some of them that I very much do agree with.

I've always learned that when someone raises a reasoned objection or a comment, it really means they're trying the idea on for size. So I'd like to think that the member and her party are, in fact, taking the concept being offered here and saying, "Whether it's perfect or not, is this something that's going to make business better and, if it is, can we work with it? Can we adapt this? Can we make this thing help businesses by getting it through this House, and getting it through the House in an expeditious manner?"

If that's what was underlying what the member offered, then I think I'm very much with her. The only comment I do want to offer is to the member's party in general: this notion that somehow or other organizations are walking off wholesale with money—I don't quite agree with that. I'm willing to buy some of her comments on dead money and I am willing to buy some of her comments on artful tax planning. But what I do have a problem with is this notion that a corporation is a sponge that you can squeeze endlessly for money without any repercussions or any consequences.

One of the delicate balancing acts for the province of Ontario is to manage our tax burden, particularly on small and medium-sized businesses, to ensure that we retain that sustainable, competitive advantage, just a little bit lower than all of the surrounding states and provinces in the industrialized heartland of North America, which is where we are. The only places lower than us in Canada

are two resource-based provinces. If we can do that, then I think there's enough middle ground that the member and I can support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I found it interesting listening to my colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo talk about this particular bill—her party's view of it, her view of it. I always enjoy listening to her, because she comes so well-prepared. The difficulty that I find in listening to what she has to say is that she represents a party that has propped up a government that has brought this legislation forth, and this legislation is—to describe it as a grain of sand on the beach or a drop in the bucket is to be charitable.

This is a very small piece of the puzzle. I speak—and I will speak at length in a couple of moments—as a person who owned and operated a small business for a number of years and understands what the implications are of changes to the tax code. Small changes to the tax code can mean an awful lot if it comes down to hiring employees, but in this particular case we're talking about, as I say, a drop in the bucket.

I'll explain more fully when I speak, when I mention a particular figure. If you apply the differential between a \$400,000 exemption level and a \$450,000 exemption level, which is anticipated by this bill, if passed, to start next year, you're talking about an amount that falls to the bottom line of a small business of about 975 bucks a year—\$975 less the corporate income tax that's applied to that.

What exactly is that supposed to do for a business? That's the thing that seems to escape my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo, as well as the Liberal Party. The folks on my left, the NDP, talk about how they are going to finance the province, and I must say, I watched one of them speaking on media a couple of weeks ago, saying that to finance things going forward, for example, on the transit file, it would be simple enough to close tax loopholes and tax corporations. I speak as a person who was a Montrealer when we watched that skyline shut down and this skyline get built. It can as easily go from Toronto to Calgary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for the debate that we had here and her contributions to Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act, as well as the member for Mississauga–Streetsville and the member from Thornhill.

I also just wanted to add in a quick—I don't know if this is a point of order—congratulations to the Minister of Health on her new grandbaby today.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always an exciting time to have that happen in a family.

We're talking about supporting small businesses, and the initiatives that we can take to promote job creation. Hopefully this is one of those things that's going to

happen. It's going to help small business, yes, and save some of their employer health tax on their payroll, but with that savings, we hope that that will be put back into the business to maybe create jobs. Small amount that it might be, it's going to help small businesses, in a way, to hopefully grow the economy.

In my riding, I have wonderful local small businesses. The business improvement association in our neighbourhood does a lot of great work. Without those small businesses, a lot of those local jobs wouldn't be there, so we need to do what we can to promote small business.

As well, I want to make comments to the member from Thornhill. Every corporation, every small business and every citizen has a role to play in our economy, and we all have to contribute to the success of Ontario. If that means we need to look at other ways of closing corporate tax loopholes so that they can also contribute to the economy being stimulated and creating jobs, that's what we all need to do. We're all in this together. It's not just about one particular segment, but we all have to do our part. With corporations having those loopholes that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has talked about, it means we can do a little bit more to close those loopholes and have that contribution come back into the economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm very pleased to speak on Bill 105. This bill will help small businesses. As we all know, small business is the backbone of our economy, and 43% of the businesses in Canada are small businesses. In the province of Ontario, there are 392,000 businesses, and this bill will benefit all those small businesses.

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I know, as a former businesswoman, what it takes to run a small business. Every small thing counts when you're running a small business, and this bill will also reduce the cost of hiring, as well as it will also reduce red tape for small businesses. It would reduce red tape in the same way as when we implemented the HST. Ontario's business tax reforms will provide businesses with the benefit of \$8.5 billion of tax relief. Small business not only creates the jobs, but it also drives the local economy. So it's good public policy, and this bill should pass as soon as possible so that it can go to committee and we can hear from the stakeholders.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments, and I return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you to my colleagues for commenting on some of the points that I've made.

I find it interesting that the member from Mississauga–Streetsville wasn't necessarily buying some of the comments that I made. I wasn't selling those comments. The very fact that between 2001 and 2011 the total cash reserves of private non-financial corporations in Canada grew from \$187 billion to \$575 billion—that is a fact. So you can buy it or you can sell it, whatever. What is very clear to us in the province of Ontario and in this party is

that a lot of those corporate tax breaks—we're being very generous with them and they are not working. We want corporate Ontario to be part of the solution.

I think the member from London–Fanshawe accurately points out that corporations want to be part of the solution, but they also want to have some confidence in the work that's happening in this place. Hopefully, that will come with the Financial Accountability Office.

The member from Thornhill always pivots back to a traditional spot, where they say that we're just holding you up. I think it's really disrespectful for the people of the province of Ontario. They sent a minority government to this place, and they want us to put them first—not their own political interests. So we are doing that. We are honouring the wishes of the people of this province by trying to get results for them. I know that it bothers the member from Thornhill and some of the other PC caucus members because when they knock on doors, they have nothing to show for it. We have a track record, and we are making it work for the people of this province.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Whenever they get angry, I get happy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there has been more than six-and-one-half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader or his designate specifies otherwise.

I'm pleased to recognize the Deputy Premier and Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we would like this debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Scarborough–Guildwood for her maiden speech in the Ontario Legislature.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I am pleased to rise in the House today for the first time to present a speech to the Legislature of Ontario. I'm so pleased that joining me in the Legislature is Dayani Ravichandran, who is a special assistant working with me here at Queen's Park and at my constituency office, as well as our newly appointed intern, Jessica Behnke, who has just joined us as of last week.

I know there are people from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood watching. My family is also watching, including my younger brother, Andrew Hunter, who has just graduated last week with his MBA from Henley university.

I am so glad that my maiden speech is on Bill 105. It's all about small businesses, which are really the heart of our economy. Our family has a history of small business owners, starting back with my grandmother who ran a small business in our community back in Jamaica. I also have many relatives, including my own father, who ran small businesses at some point in their careers. In fact, I

started my career as a small business owner. While in university, I started a small business with the help of a grant that was provided by the government of Ontario to help students start businesses. This Ontario government grant allowed me to provide the seed money to secure office space and to hire employees, who, of course, were students I went to school with.

I have been given the opportunity to succeed by provincial governments of the past, and I want to recognize them, under Premier Ernie Eves, as well as Premier Dalton McGuinty. Ontarians today deserve those same opportunities and incentives to help their ventures to succeed.

My career has taken me from small business ownership to working at some of our country's largest corporations, to working in charitable organizations and non-profit organizations as well as municipal corporations.

I've also had a variety of mentors from across the political spectrum: business leaders, such as Mike Pederson and Courtney Pratt; political pioneers, such as Dr. Alvin Curling and the Honourable Jean Augustine; community and civic luminaries, such as the late David Pecaut, who was the founding chair of CivicAction, or the current chair, Mr. John Tory.

I'm so pleased today to welcome Tamara Balan, who is an employee at CivicAction. She has come to join us today, and I want to welcome her.

I've worked on a range of issues throughout my career, including work access for people who face multiple barriers to employment, affordable housing, as well as youth at risk. These are the issues that are still very much close to my heart. As a government, we need to invest in our youth in this province, we need to ensure a healthy future for our aging population, and we need to address homelessness and poverty in Ontario.

I am incredibly honoured to be here now as the newly elected member of provincial Parliament representing the riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. I am also deeply humbled to be working with Minister Ted McMeekin as parliamentary assistant to community and social services.

I have been given the mandate from the people of Scarborough–Guildwood. They have entrusted me to represent their interests and to share their values right here at Queen's Park and to be their strong voice. So today I will be speaking in support of Bill 105, on behalf of the small businesses in Scarborough–Guildwood.

From my history in the private sector, my past experience as a small business owner and from my time working in large corporations, I can understand the struggles of the small business community. Bill 105 seeks to help more than 60,000 businesses in Ontario by introducing reforms that will bring reduction to taxes, to bring businesses with annual payrolls of under \$5 million much-needed tax relief. This is part of the Ontario government's plan to invest in Ontario businesses and to make Ontario the most attractive place to do business in North America and indeed the world.

With this bill, the government is trying to ensure that in years to come, small businesses will have a consistent

reduction in their taxes. This is a good bill that intends to help Ontario businesses, while promoting jobs within Ontario. It is a bill that I know, should it pass, will help small business owners in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

During my time on the campaign trail, and since then, I have had the opportunity to speak to many small business owners in Scarborough–Guildwood. In fact, our small businesses are really the heart of our community. From St. Mary's Sizzle, where I've had the opportunity to have lunch many times during the campaign and since, to Govardhan Thal restaurant—the owners are the Shah family; I've also had the opportunity to go to their facility, and they are just an active family that's helping a thriving local community.

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To Z Creations and Herbal Beauty, to Mirch Masala Groceries—this is a cluster of small businesses that serves a particular community right in Scarborough–Guildwood—as well as Passion Hair salon: I had the opportunity to go and celebrate one of their anniversaries and to talk with many of their patrons. I truly believe that these small businesses really drive the prosperity in our communities.

Small business owners are at that heart of our community. They bring their cultures and customs to my riding. They bring wonderful food and beautiful clothes. They bring music; their language; their literature. They make Scarborough–Guildwood such a beautiful, diverse and vibrant place to live and work.

While these small business owners are hopeful and optimistic, they also have voiced concerns and fears to me. Of course, from my time as a business owner I can understand the difficulties in earning and keeping clients as well as catering to the many needs of those clients. The cost of doing business is high in this province. While the Ontario government has made many inroads on this issue and while Ontario is a vibrant and dynamic business environment, there is still more that we can do.

This government has introduced the harmonized sales tax, which will, when fully phased in, eliminate \$4.6 billion per year in embedded taxes paid by businesses. We have eliminated the capital tax, which forced corporations to pay regardless of profit and was a significant disincentive to investment. We have cut corporate income tax rates. The Ontario government has been committed to creating a business incentive environment in Ontario, aiming to make Ontario one of the most attractive and competitive places to do business in North America and indeed the world.

We have been succeeding. Ontario went from the highest corporate tax rate to the third lowest in the country. The elimination of the capital tax is saving Ontario businesses more than \$2.1 billion per year. Further investments, like cutting the business education tax and providing the research and development tax, support our attractiveness as a place to do business.

Canada is becoming more competitive as a country. Our business climate here is highly valued. KPMG's

2012 Competitive Alternatives report ranks Canada the second most competitive country among 14 major global economies, outranking both China and the United States. Toronto has been ranked as the fifth in competitiveness against 55 major international cities, including Chennai and Mumbai in India, Chengdu, and Vancouver. Canada leads the G8, according to the PricewaterhouseCoopers' study. The Economist Intelligence Unit ranks Canada as the best place for doing business in the G7, and fifth out of 82 countries over a forecast period between 2013 and 2017.

It is clear that doing business in Canada is attractive to the international community. We are well on our way to becoming the most attractive province for investment in the country. But becoming completely competitive here in Ontario also includes creating more incentives for small businesses. These small business owners and entrepreneurs are looking for us to lead.

This is what Bill 105 seeks to do. Bill 105 proposes amendments to the employer health act. Should it pass, tens of thousands of small businesses in Ontario will benefit vastly. Under the current legislation, there is no exemption threshold. Should the amendment pass, businesses with payrolls under \$5 million will be exempt from paying the employer health tax on the first \$450,000 of their payroll each and every year. The current exemption is on the first \$400,000. This amendment—I want to thank Minister Sousa for bringing it forward—greatly benefits small business owners and entrepreneurs. Furthermore, it creates incentives for people who want to start their own businesses, like many of the youth and young families in Scarborough–Guildwood.

I know that we're putting other measures in place to incent our young people to start businesses, and this reduction is going to help them along in that decision. This government is committed to investing in people, to investing in our infrastructure and to investing in a dynamic and innovative business climate, and this legislation is one of the ways by which we are doing that.

Small businesses create jobs. Eighty-five percent of all new jobs, as mentioned earlier by the member from Parkdale–High Park, are created by our small businesses. So many new jobs come from that sector, and this government sees the value and the potential in supporting small businesses. That is why the Ontario government is supporting them with Bill 105.

When I think about the small business owners in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, I think about how hard-working they are and how well they treat their employees. But I also think about how tax cuts could benefit them. They could invest in more marketing opportunities, in new equipment or in research. They could afford to hire more employees to meet growing demands. They might even be able to hire more employees so that they might be able to take some time off, and we all know that small business owners rarely get time off. They could renovate and expand their businesses. They could improve their inventory. They could pay their

employees even just that little bit more for their hard work. There are so many benefits to cutting taxes for small business owners, and I am proud to stand here with this government and try to implement these cuts. For these reasons, I support Bill 105, and I hope it will pass for the benefit of the small business owners in Ontario.

In fact, this very week we are recognizing small business in Canada; I believe this is the week that we are acknowledging that. Of the rankings that were produced, 15 out of 34 of those communities that really support small businesses are right here in Ontario.

We have to do a much better job of supporting our small business owners so that they will continue to flourish and continue to drive and support our economy and create jobs right here in Ontario, to support both their families and their communities, such as mine in Scarborough–Guildwood.

I want to thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity to rise in this House and address this Legislature on this very important Bill 105 in support of small businesses in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to join the other members in congratulating the member from Scarborough–Guildwood on her maiden speech on an important bill, Bill 105. It was pleasant to hear her link the purpose of this small business discussion to her own experience—both her grandfather in her place of birth, as she mentioned, as well as her own experiences as a university student getting a grant from the provincial government. I hope it was under Ernie Eves back then, because you've had a few years working in your community. You're right: We all stand here to support small business. Again, I want to leave that as the genuine sentiment I felt listening to your remarks.

To interject a bit of humour into it—not to be critical of your remarks—I always think that in Ontario today, if you want to create a small business under a Liberal government, you start with a large business. They start imposing taxes and regulations, and it eventually becomes a small business.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's meant in sort of a light-hearted way. I hope you get the opportunity to serve in opposition, because our role here, as the name implies, is to oppose things. We have to bring forward comments that reflect that we have a different point of view.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, has provided an opportunity for our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, to bring forward a jobs plan. What did they bring forward? A minor little tinkering with the with the employer health tax, which is just a tax grab. With all due respect, if you wanted to serve the people of your riding, you did say one thing—I think this is important to put on the record. She did say that tax cuts benefit people, and small business specifically. I agree with that sentiment as well.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to, first of all, welcome—a little late—the member from Scarborough–Guildwood to the Legislature and congratulate her on her election. It's very exciting to stand up and, for the first time, talk about yourself, about your riding and, of course, weigh in a little bit on the bill that we're talking about right now.

I was interested to hear some of your comments about—a bit of an admission—the cost of doing business, and it being kind of high in Ontario. I agree with a number of the areas that the member identified as being prohibitive to business in Ontario. But one of the things that I noticed that the member didn't raise is, actually, the price of hydro and how that relates and how that really impacts small business in particular, but really all business, even large industrial users, as we see in my riding of Kenora–Rainy River.

What we have seen is that businesses in Ontario are paying hydro bills that are two times the rate of those in Manitoba, which—I'm not sure if you know exactly where Kenora–Rainy River is, but it straddles the Manitoba border, and it's really, really frustrating for people to look, maybe, 100 kilometres or 50 kilometres to the west of us and to have to come to that realization that they are not getting the same kinds of breaks.

Other than that, I just wanted to say welcome, and I appreciate that you've brought a critical perspective. I look forward to hearing more from you as time goes on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is a time to welcome a new member to the Legislative Assembly. This is a woman who has a strong track record of speaking out on behalf of her community in Scarborough. This is something that only happens to us once: when we stand up and make our maiden speech. As members, this isn't the time to say "I'm a Liberal," "I'm a Conservative," "I'm a New Democrat," "I agree with you," "I don't agree with you." This is a time to remember that each and every one of us are members of provincial Parliament who are all sent here by our ridings, and for whatever the member may do in the future, this is the time to say congratulations on your first set of remarks that are going down on Hansard. Congratulations on having delivered them with some style and with some grace.

You've done a lot of research. You've spoken movingly about the people who've sent you here. You've talked about the reason that you came. You've talked about the motivation for putting your name on the ballot and you've talked about why, for the next however many years, you have the good fortune and the motivation to come here to work. You're going to get up early in the morning—you're going to spend a lot of time getting up before dark and you won't get home to your house and your family and all of the things that you like to do until it's after dark. But in that time you'll be down here being a member of provincial Parliament with a group of other dedicated men and women, regardless of whether they were sent here as Liberals, as Conservatives or as New Democrats, and they will all be your colleagues.

We're very proud of the new member for Scarborough–Guildwood. We welcome her as a member of our caucus, just as we've stood to welcome the new members of the NDP and Progressive Conservative caucus. Speaker, this is the province of Ontario. These are the 107 members who the 13 million people of our Ontario family have sent to govern us, and we welcome a new one with her maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to offer some words to our member from Scarborough–Guildwood. Welcome. I look forward to working with you. And I'm going to say this one in jest, but there is a bit of a messaging here. Your brother has an MBA, and if he's not working yet, I think there's a potential career for him to start a new business. He could perhaps start a business in Debt Financing 101 for all the youths of our country, because after the last couple of years that we've seen, we may need a lot of that.

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to bring remarks, and I think the member has done an admirable job getting up to speed and learning the ropes so far.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: Your speaker can't hear. I'm trying to give compliments to one of your colleagues.

This is similar: the catchy title and there's nothing after that but a bunch of blah, blah, blah. We need substance. If they really wanted to help small business, as I've said in here probably three or four or five times today, they could stop tweaking at the edges, as my colleague from Huron–Bruce said. They need to stop making a catchy title and tweaking. They need to have some fundamental change. They need to ensure that those businesses have hope at the end of the day, that they have less taxes, that they have less red tape, that they have less administrative burden on all those small businesses, which typically are the mom-and-pop shops who have to do all the work across the spectrum. They don't have staff. They don't have a lot of other people. They're typically, from start to finish, that whole business. We overburden them with paperwork and reports and things that aren't value-added to them or to their consumer.

What we need is to get a lot of that out of the way so those businesses can thrive, so they can hire more people, so children want to take over the family business at the end of the day. We need lower energy rates so that it's attractive to come to Ontario, to remain in Ontario, to build our businesses and expand our businesses.

We really have to get back to the fundamentals, and I believe the member opposite is on the same wavelength, that we need to have some fundamental change to support small business, as we are.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. The member for Scarborough–Guildwood has two minutes to reply, if she wishes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. It's such a pleasure to speak to my colleagues and to work with all

of you. From my background, you can see that I am someone who is collaborative and very open in my approach. I work with all individuals. I have always done that throughout my career. All of you have actually made me feel very welcome in this House, and I'm appreciative of that.

I want to thank the member from Durham. I should acknowledge that in my very early years, when my family came to Ontario, we settled in Durham, in the town of Pickering. It's a community that I'm also very fond of.

Tax cuts do benefit people and communities. What I believe is that they really allow small business owners to reinvest those cuts into things they prioritize, as I mentioned in my remarks.

I also want to thank the member from Kenora-Rainy River. I do appreciate the needs in her community, and I very much respect her ability to stand and speak very eloquently about that and about the cost of doing business.

I want to thank, as well, the member from Mississauga-Streetsville. I am absolutely proud to join our Premier and this Liberal caucus and the work we do and the values we share to make things better for Ontarians.

I am also going to just respond to the offer of the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. My brother Andrew Hunter, upon graduation, actually received multiple offers and is going to be starting his career in a parts manufacturing company just outside of London, in the community of St. Thomas. Thank you for that offer. I will pass that along to him—and absolutely resonating that businesses need hope and we need to get rid of the unnecessary burden so that we can advance the economy in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I must say, first of all, although this is not the time for questions and comments, that I would like to add my voice in congratulating our new friend from Scarborough-Guildwood on her excellent maiden speech. I want you to trust me when I say that when you're a few years down the road and a little longer in the tooth, you won't be so wide-eyed, but I think those are good precepts to keep in mind. If we could all come to work every day here and be a little less jaded, I guess it would be a better place.

In any event, I got a call at my office last week from the people who are responsible for legislative affairs in our party, asking if I would be interested in speaking for a few moments on Bill 105, and I thought to myself, why would I really want to waste my breath on Bill 105? It's a sop to small business.

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The answer actually is, I want to speak to it for that very reason: because all it is is a sop to small business. Since I spent a goodly number of years—about 14—owning and operating my own small business, there is a place for small business not only in the hearts and minds of the 85% of Ontarians who are employed by small

business, earn their living in small business, but also those of us who have had the fortune, sometimes misfortune, of being involved in small business and depending on the government, more than anything else, to create structures that allow us to operate freely, to make a buck, to be able to pay our employees and to not be burdened with red tape to the point where it snows us under.

I've got to say that, like many people in small business, I took something that was tiny and built it not into a monster corporation, but into something that I could be proud of and that went from employing about 12 people to employing 120 people. So I fit right into the category that is primarily covered by Bill 105—the kind of company that didn't have a payroll in excess of \$5 million, albeit there is something in there that addresses that issue, but one that did have a payroll in the millions of dollars that looked to the exemption that, at the time I ran my business, didn't exist, but was brought in during that period by the Harris government of the Progressive Conservative Party. That was an exemption of the first \$400,000 of annual payroll to the employer's health tax, and that was welcomed. This bill wants to increase that next year by \$50,000.

On the face of it, that sounds fine. Yes, I'll put myself on the record right now and say I'm going to vote for this because there's nothing that suggests that I shouldn't. It's harmless. But it is at the same time not particularly helpful, and that's where I want to focus my comments.

If you take a look at the fact that, really, it is 85% of the province that works in something called SME, small and medium enterprises, and therefore is involved in small business on an everyday basis, you want your small business to be in a position to be prosperous. What does an additional \$50,000 exemption on the employer health tax mean on the bottom line? I've done the math, and the math is precisely \$975. That's what happens at the end of the day when you apply the additional \$50,000, if you're in one of the approximately 60,000 qualifying companies.

If you have payroll that's somewhere in the \$400,000 to \$450,000 per annum range, or up to \$5 million, which is inclusive, the \$975 is never going to be the difference between whether you stay in business or go out of business. It's just not enough money. In fact, if I want to be really honest about it, the \$975, if it drops to the bottom line, is then subject to 11.5% income tax. It really is more like 850 disposable dollars. That's not enough, if you awarded it to yourself as the owner to take a bonus, to take you and your significant other to Florida and pay the airfare. So we're not talking about a heck of a lot of money.

What does that mean? It means that, at a cost of \$5 million per year—the estimates given to us by the government that is putting this bill on the table—in the overall scheme of things, it's not a whole heck of a lot of money. It wants to take credit for doing something fantastic for small business when it's not doing something that helps small business in any real way at all. That's the

problem we've got. That's the problem that our party tries to address every single day.

The legislation kind of exemplifies what's wrong with the government of the day. We're looking, as people who are trying to address the small business and, indeed, the large business situation, at a government that seems to be paying no heed to hydro rates that are skyrocketing, to increases in the premiums paid for WSIB, to taxes paid to the College of Trades, to outdated apprenticeship ratios and to so much red tape that even people with five or 10 employees are snowed under trying to complete forms or go online and file returns on various different types of taxes or practices, and they get caught in that web. For their trouble, they get a bill that comes to this Legislative Assembly that ultimately results in \$975 gross, \$850 net per year in their pockets. We're now into the sixth or seventh hour of debate on this thing.

To put that in perspective, if you, Speaker, take all of the members of provincial Parliament who are here, the electricity that we're expending on these beautiful chandeliers in this august chamber, the cost to heat the building, the cost for the cleaners to come in here and do the carpets, the cost for the legislative security force that protects the building and allows debate to continue unfettered so we don't get shouted down by angry citizens—because I believe we would, were they not there—and all of the other support staff who work here, I'm sure that the cost of this debate at this point has been in excess of \$5 million. That's the problem that we've got.

Hon. John Milloy: Let it go on.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm not the one who is proliferating the debate. If you guys on the other side want to keep on debating, that's fine, because this is a careless bill, and a careless bill that doesn't even begin to address what it is that businesses actually need to succeed.

What do they need? They need, perhaps, accelerated depreciation. They need, perhaps, a fix to how small business loans are dealt with at the banking level. They need, certainly, the reduction in red tape that I talked about. They need some kind of incentive to be able to increase employment. We watched the NDP prop up that government to create a youth employment program, and yet unemployment still runs the highest in the land, save for PEI, and that's for five to six years.

The bottom line is that what we're dealing with in this bill is a public relations play. What's it there for? It's to occupy our time—and those of you who are watching me on television and the rest of us, to occupy your time—to take your minds off of the fact that we have just finished an exercise where the Auditor General has told us that we have spent \$1.1 billion on gas plants that were not wanted in the end and were half-built, \$1.1 billion that they threw down the drain. What? To pave the way so that we could debate a bill that they're going to spend \$5 million on to stimulate small business.

People—I'm talking to you, Liberals—if you really want to stimulate small business, see how much of an attack you get from this side for spending \$1 billion

doing that and \$5 million to stop gas plants. But it's in reverse—it's in reverse, Speaker—and it applies on a number of levels. We talk about gas plants, but we could be talking about eHealth. We could be talking about Ornge. We could be talking about all of these things that, in the parlance of this place, have turned out to be boondoggles in the sense of actually administering the people's money in the proper way. That's what this bill really underscores for me.

What I'd like to see is a legitimate plan on the part of this government, the kind that was discussed in question period this morning by our leader, Tim Hudak, and by our finance critic, Mr. Fedeli: the concept of giving us an overall approach to how we create jobs in this province—not by dribs and drabs of under \$1,000 per year of largesse on the part of this government for 60,000 small businesses, but a paving of the way for those small businesses to grow and develop and become large businesses by getting opportunities that the government puts in place by getting itself out of the way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: To the member from Thornhill: I enjoyed your speech very much today, as I most always do. It's a shame that I'm not going to be spending as much time with you in the finance committee in the future, but I look forward to some day that you might come back for your wit and wisdom and, I think, for the work that you do. I thought what you said today was an excellent analysis of the money that actually will go to small business. As you said and as I think we all realize, moving that sum of money from \$400,000 to \$450,000 was not a great deal. It was a little bit of a sop to small business, but as you correctly point out—and I don't have any reason to doubt your figures—it's \$975 maximum. That, although it will be welcome—I'm sure it will be welcomed by many small businesses, particularly the tiny ones that are mom-and-pop shops or have one or two employees; it will make a difference. For many of the other small businesses with less than \$5 million in revenue, it certainly won't make the difference between success and failure.

1710

I also noted in your speech that you're frustrated by the debate. There are ways around the debate. I was quite surprised when the Deputy Premier stood up and wanted to continue the debate. I thought most everything that needed to have been said was, but I welcome your contribution all the same.

There are many other pressing issues that confront this Legislature. We have many things that are serious to debate, where there are genuine differences of opinion between and amongst the three parties. This is not one of them. Every single speaker to date has spoken in favour of this bill, and I think that we as a Legislature need to move it expeditiously to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to respond, but very quickly I'd like to say congratulations to the member from

Scarborough—Guildwood on her maiden speech. It was a great speech. It's a pleasure to sit beside her every day, and I want to say that I'm really proud to be her seatmate and part of the class of five.

Mr. Michael Prue: The gang of five.

Mr. John Fraser: Or the group of five; whatever they call us.

My background is small business. That's where I come from. I have worked in small businesses since I was 17 years old, in small and medium-sized grocery stores. I did that for 22 years, so I know how hard people work to make ends meet and how hard it is to get a day off in a small business.

I think what we're doing here in this bill by increasing the exemption is something that is good for small business. I think we can all agree on that. I agree with the member that we should be moving forward on this, but I would like to respond in terms of what small businesses need and to go back to what our government has done. With the introduction of the HST, we've taken about \$4.6 billion a year off of embedded taxes in businesses, but more importantly, what we did is, we reduced costs in terms of compliance.

When you're in a small business and you're having to deal with two different levels of government to remit tax, that's not only a significant cost; it's a significant time consumption if you're a small business. That was a really big thing for small businesses, and I think I'd like to remind the member of that.

We also eliminated the capital tax for corporations, whether or not they had a profit. We cut the corporate income tax rate. To say that we have not done those things which are important for small business is not accurate, so I wanted to make sure that the member was aware of that. I am speaking in support of the bill, obviously.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen carefully to the member from Thornhill, who has a great history, as he described himself, but I would like to say, for the record, that he was an excellent finance critic here in the Tim Hudak opposition party. In fact, he still contributes with substance, because the way he analyzed Bill 105—the best tribute to that remark was made from the member from Beaches—East York, who is the NDP critic, when he said that he listened thoroughly and appreciated his analysis. Really, when he broke it down and he talked about the real giveback by the government being less than \$1,000—the member from Thornhill said that you couldn't take your family to vacation in Florida. In fact, if you just go out for dinner in Toronto, you would've spent the money. I really do believe that he also put on the table some really workable tools, whether it's the rapid acceleration on capital cost allowances or other measures. We've been looking for the McGuinty-Wynne government to come forward with a real action plan for Ontario.

I would say that the member that commented on behalf of the Liberal government didn't put in focus the

corporate tax back-down that the Wynne government did in the last budget. They backed away from their former promise of lowering corporate tax. That was because of pressure by the NDP, so the coalition of the NDP and the Liberals is alive and well. I'd expect that even in the next budget, potentially, they could be supporting that.

I know the member from Thornhill, in his response or his rebuttal, will bring some focus to the debate.

We support the bill. This government could call the bill and call the vote. We would be supporting it, but it's so little, and it's too little, too late. That's the real issue here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Thornhill. I do sometimes feel that it's a little bit of a walking contradiction in some regards, because some of the ideas that he said should happen, we've actually proposed. The people of this province sent a minority government to this place, so we genuinely feel that trying to make the Liberal Party, the Liberal government, do the right thing is a full-time job. It would be great if they joined us in some of that work, because who knows what we might accomplish?

He calls this piece of legislation careless. I think it's careless, actually, to come here and do nothing. People expect us to get some work done.

In fact, we proposed a job creation tax credit which would incentivize employers to create jobs. It has been proven in other jurisdictions, and it works.

We've proposed a wage subsidy for youth employment, and that idea is rolling out right now.

So we can point to tangible, actionable items that we've been able to accomplish, instead of just trying to play Let's Make a Deal with EllisDon, for instance. The Let's Make a Deal game isn't in the best interests of the people of this province. People expect you to put your considerable knowledge into play and stop playing games here with the budget.

There is so much to get accomplished. There is no reason whatsoever that we should still be debating this piece of legislation. I think that we are in full agreement. Why the delay tactics? I don't understand. There are other priorities that need to come to the fore. We want to make this piece of legislation stronger when it gets to committee. That's our job. That's what we get paid for. I look forward to getting down to work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. I return to the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker. Thank you, too, to my colleague from Beaches—East York. I must say that I, too, will miss our friendly debates, sometimes rivalry and sometimes arm-in-arm embraces, in the Standing Committee on Finance. But you're right; you never know. I never say never.

The member from Ottawa South: We haven't really engaged before, other than to say hello in the halls. You also have a background in small business, and so I know

you understand. But I don't think it behooves you to stand in this Legislature and take credit for the HST and expect any great sympathy from the folks out there.

My friend from Durham always has nice things to say about me, so I'll leave that one alone.

To my friend from Kitchener–Waterloo, what I have to say to you is that you can't point your finger over there and talk about bad government at the same time as saying that you're going to continue to play ball to make things better. It just doesn't work.

Let me conclude—I have 60 seconds left—by giving you an example. When I had my small business, my payroll—it was a very payroll-intensive business—was about \$250,000 per month. We billed for our services. So I was out \$250,000, or, more correctly, the bank credit line was, before I ever billed. It was net 30-day billing, so if everybody paid on time, I was out \$500,000 before I ever saw dollar one. If you take 3%, the employer health tax, and multiply that, you get \$15,000 by two months. Take a sixth of that—two months is a sixth of the year. That's \$2,500 cost to the bank, and I get to pay that every two months. So it's \$15,000 per year, and I'm getting back \$975. That's my quick math lesson.

So small business needs benefits, but this is too little, too late.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, it's a pleasure rising on behalf of constituents and people in Algoma–Manitoulin to speak to Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

I must say, it's refreshing, Mr. Speaker, to be here today to discuss this bill aimed at protecting small business rather than the recent happenings in the House, which aim to protect the interests of a rather large corporation. We see with this, I would say, a different coalition between the Conservatives and Liberals, in regard to the EllisDon bill.

1720

This bill aims to eliminate the loophole that allows large companies not to pay the employee health tax on the first \$400,000 in employee payroll. This is the sort of welcome assistance we can give to small businesses across the province. Many of these businesses are struggling to keep afloat, and this exemption is something that will make a real difference in their day-to-day operating costs.

We are all elected to come here and make decisions that will support and help working families across Ontario, and that includes small business. A bill like this will provide that support for small and emerging businesses—a small step indeed, but a step in the right direction.

During our budget negotiations last year, we argued that while the exemption is appropriate for these small companies making under \$400,000, we don't believe that companies with \$5 million in payroll need an exemption from the employee health tax on the first \$400,000. That doesn't make any sense. It is a revenue that this province

certainly needs, especially as of late with the recent happenings. But providing such a break to small business owners is a very useful thing and a very good thing because we know and we realize that so many smaller companies are creating a lot of good jobs, and we need to support them.

In our current economic climate, we believe that giving banks and large corporations a break just doesn't make any sense. We brought up these concerns with the Liberals and made it clear that we should support small business and let big business survive on their own. We even talked about bringing in a jobs creation tax credit, one that actually would incent businesses to create jobs and also provide a return. If you're going to be provided with a tax incentive, then you need to be creating a job, something that we absolutely need, instead of giving the large donations to their banks and their coffers and not getting anything back for small communities, small northern communities, small Ontario communities and small businesses across this province. Therefore, one of the budget demands we made was to have companies with \$5 million in payroll or more no longer be eligible for that exemption, and that is included in this legislation—something that we very much enjoyed seeing there. We think this is okay. This is why many of our colleagues, such as myself and a lot in this room, are looking forward to supporting and moving this bill into discussions.

We note that this bill will also increase the exemption amount to \$450,000 for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years. Starting in 2019, the exemption amount is adjusted for inflation every five years. The consequences of this small change will mean that the government will lose what would be a significant amount of money in difficult economic times. However, we will focus today on the gains to be made by small business owners. As I said earlier, I'm very happy that the government has come forward with this bill to give a hand to small business in Ontario rather than supporting their business friends with deep pockets.

The riding of Algoma–Manitoulin is comprised of thousands of small businesses. We don't have the numbers of large corporations you see in metropolitan Toronto. Families are struggling in the north. Many of the primary industries have been hit with economic hardship and are struggling to survive. I can't begin to name all the cuts we have had in the north. These affect businesses of all sizes and have drastic economic impacts on each and every town and on families living within the north.

However, there is some good news that I'd like to share with you that is a happening in northern Algoma–Manitoulin, starting in the particular community of Hornepayne, where there was a huge investment that was put into biomass generation which will secure and provide long-term economic opportunities for that community and the individuals who work in the mill within the forestry sector. We're looking at securing roughly anywhere between 100 to 120 jobs. That's very important.

This weekend, at the Gitchi Animki hydroelectric project, which is a joint venture between Pic Mobert and

Regional Power—they joined together to start a project which will secure hundreds of jobs during the construction phase, but it's going to mean a viable opportunity for that community in Pic Mobert First Nation, which has been struggling over the course of the years but has redefined and regenerated themselves and are looking towards providing a better future for their community. So that's going to be very interesting to see move forward.

Also, their neighbour, along with the community of White River and the leadership that has been there—White River and Pic Mobert have gone into a joint venture to open up old sawmill that had been closed for the last six years. It's called White River Forest Products. Again, they've started up just recently, as far as the last four weeks. They delivered their first lumber a couple of weeks ago, which was very exciting and welcome news for that community.

Things are progressing in northern Ontario, but we still need to help those small communities, because now what's happened is, the small businesses that were in those communities have lost their workforce. Now they're going to be looking for individuals to come into their places of business so they can continue to survive and thrive, so a good news story has actually created another challenge for those communities. I just wanted to bring that to your attention: that it's not all bad, but the good that is happening is because of the hard work that has been moving forward.

Then again, we see more and more government agencies closing shop and moving to larger cities, like the serious cuts to ServiceOntario. Many small family-run businesses are already experiencing cutbacks to top-ups which made their businesses available to operate. Many of these businesses have these kiosks that offer health cards, fishing licences and outdoor licences, and a lot of them are losing their services for their small communities and pushing the services outside of their communities.

I need to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that some of these services, where you have a small car dealership within its community—it basically means they can't close a sale on a Friday afternoon or on a Monday, because the ServiceOntario office is closed. This is going to have a huge impact on them. A small dealership losing an opportunity to sell a \$30,000, \$40,000 or \$50,000 vehicle is a huge impact for them, because those individuals are going to move on to another centre and actually get the sale where it's going to actually close.

Mr. Speaker, as mining critic, I've had a lot of meetings over the past few years related to the Ring of Fire especially and mining in general in northern Ontario. As we all have been told, about 500 kilometres north of Thunder Bay, in the area coined as the Ring of Fire, we have a world-class chromite deposit, one said to be worth billions of dollars. We have met with many companies, some large foreign companies and many junior companies from right here in Ontario. One thing that everyone has indicated is that the wealth that could be derived from the Ring of Fire is unprecedented in Ontario.

Many of these companies have clearly illustrated how thousands and thousands of jobs could be created. We have a prospect of revenue sharing with First Nations in this region. We have the possibility of refining and manufacturing and many, many other jobs that would be available. But what blows my mind is that this government has come up with a very sophisticated taxing system which provides loopholes for the wealthy, but they have no plan for the Ring of Fire. No plan for infrastructure; no plan at all. It seems like just a pipe dream in the air. I don't know what's going to happen or when it's going to be moving forward, and no one else in this province seems to know what's going on.

Again, I am pleased to see that small business owners will get a small tax break at the moment. This is a good thing—again, a good step in the right direction. But there is a bigger scheme here; there's a bigger plan that we need for the province. But rather than create loophole after loophole for those who are doing more than fine, I would like to see this government work with us on a real job creation plan. The province does extend further north than Bay Street. I would like to see this government work with us to create a job creation plan for northern Ontario.

With the recent slashing to the jobs in the MNR, the ServiceOntario kiosks, numerous programs and services we have lost in the north, northerners need a break, too. While I applaud this move to help small businesses, I will end by urging this government to work to support emerging business development in this province. Northern Ontario and the mining sector is a good place to start and a potential dramatic increase that we could create jobs. We can create jobs, build businesses in the north and not only boost the economy in the north, but across this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?
1730

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased, again, to speak on Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

Before I do that, I would like to congratulate the new member from Scarborough-Guildwood. She's a wonderful new addition to our caucus. I got to know her when she was working for a not-for-profit organization, and soon I saw the potential in that person, but I never knew that one day she would come and join us in our caucus. But I'm very pleased to see her here with us and also to get to know her better.

I didn't know that she started her career as a small business person. But it's wonderful to see that the government can support those young people graduating from university who have good ideas, and they just need a bit of seed money to start their organization. We have too many young people who are looking for jobs.

While I'm saying this, if you compare us to countries in Europe like France and other countries in Europe, the unemployment of youth under 30 years old is a lot higher than here. But we need to pay attention as government. It's nice that we are supporting them and that we can see a young woman going from university to opening her

own business, and a few years later, she's here with us in the chamber.

So I wanted to encourage young people to seize the opportunity to start their own business and to be a successful business person later on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to offer remarks in regard to the comments made by our colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin. He finished it off by saying that this is a small move in the right direction, and I don't disagree with that. But it truly is; it's a minuscule step, considering the other big things that should be being done and the necessary things that need to be done to get this province back moving again, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to paraphrase, but I think what he was saying is very similar to my colleagues from Thornhill and Durham: that it's too little too late, and we're tweaking it on the edges, not getting down to the fundamentals.

He talked a lot about the small businesses on Manitoulin Island. They're very similar to my riding. At the end of my riding, you take the Chi-Cheemaun across the water and go into his riding, and it's very similar. We're made up significantly by small businesses.

They're the driver of our economy. They're a driver of jobs. They're a driver of anything positive that is going to happen in our community. We need to be doing things that are going to support them and ensure that they remain in business, that they thrive in business, that new businesses open and that people have that hope and willingness to open a small business and take the risk. I think it's fundamental that we all look in this House for those types of things that we can do to support and enhance.

He talked at length about the Ring of Fire, and I think he was sounding very much like my Conservative caucus colleagues.

There is no job creation plan that we've had evidence of yet. Premier Wynne has been in government and in office as Premier for nine to 10 months now. We keep hearing all of the rhetoric about, "We're going to be different; we're going to change," but we still don't see that plan coming forward. We see tweaking on the edges, we see smart titles that maybe the public is picking up on. But I think at the end of the day, Speaker, people are seeing through that.

We need a plan. We need to reduce red tape and bureaucracy. We need to reduce and decrease taxes. We need to ensure that the hydro costs for all of those businesses out there are affordable so that once again we can lead the economic engine of Canada, as we should.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to rise and have the opportunity to comment on some of the remarks that were made by the colleague, the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, who I know is a very hard-working northerner who fights for all the right things, which is his constituents. You can pay me the five bucks later for that.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Dinner. You've got a dinner coming.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Okay, there we go: dinner. That would be great, especially if you've gone hunting recently. That would be even better.

As he said in his remarks, it's not all bad. It's not all doom and gloom in the province of Ontario. There are some exceptions. There are some people, some businesses and some communities that are flourishing. Really, they're flourishing in spite of this government's policies.

He talks at length about the Ring of Fire and the fact that we really don't have any indication as to what's happening in the Ring of Fire. Ever since I was elected, it was this buzzword that was always called upon to assure people from one end of the province to the other end: "Jobs are coming. Prosperity is coming. We're working on it; we're working on it very closely." But we have seen time and time again that there actually isn't a lot of work going on there.

I think, not just as the critic for aboriginal affairs but also as a person who lives in Kenora-Rainy River that has 49 First Nations communities, that a big part of that boils down to the fact that this government hasn't been taking its relationship with First Nation communities seriously. What needs to happen is that there needs to be a relationship of respect, of dialogue, not just emphasis on consultation but an emphasis on consent.

There's more that I would like to talk about because I spent this past constituency week meeting with some of those First Nation communities. It's something that I've heard time and again.

Government has a responsibility to have a vision and to come up with a job creation plan. In order to do that, what they need to do is sit down, they need to listen, and they need to work together with all partners across the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to be able to speak briefly to Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, and respond to the remarks by the member from Manitoulin-Algoma—or the other way around? Algoma-Manitoulin, okay.

I think it's important for small businesses. It doesn't matter whether they're located here in the GTA, whether they're in our neck of the woods out in Guelph and Wellington, rural Ontario, central Ontario, northern Ontario—no matter where you go in Ontario, small businesses are the predominant employers. When we think about growing jobs in the economy, we know that it's really important that we support our small business owners.

What this bill does is give small business owners a bit of a break with respect to the employer health tax. It says that small business owners with a payroll of under \$5 million—frankly that covers a lot of small businesses, that their annual payroll is less than \$5 million—would be exempt from paying the employer health tax on the

first \$450,000 of their payroll each year. That makes a big difference to a small business owner.

Somebody earlier over there said, "So what?" But if you're a small business owner, you're not counting in the hundreds of thousands. In many cases, you're counting in the thousands or the tens of thousands when you're looking at what's your annual income and what's your profit on your business. So this can make a huge difference, and I'm very pleased that we've taken this initiative. I hope both sides will be willing to support this initiative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments, and we return to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin for his reply.

Mr. Michael Mantha: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, I want to thank her for her comments that she made in regard to the inaugural speech from the member for Scarborough-Guildwood. I would have wished that she could have made a comment toward the comments that I had made, but maybe we can have a chat later on.

To the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, you're right. It is a small step. I understand the position that the Conservatives are taking that it's a little step a little too late. I understand it; I don't agree with it. Don't get me wrong. I choose to look at it another way: It's never too late to do the right thing. However small that step is, we have to be able to take that step in the right direction. Always saying no or saying, "You're too late," is not going to be good for Ontarians. We really need to take those steps when we have the opportunity to take those steps and move forward with issues and work together.

To the member and my good friend from Kenora-Rainy River where we both come from, very similar areas and similar ridings, yes, my friend, I do have partridge, and I've got lots of moose. Also, I might interest you in some smoked turkey, because my brother-in-law just brought me a delicious smoked turkey. You wouldn't believe how delicious that tastes.

But to your comments in regard to the Ring of Fire, I look forward to working with you and getting to your communities as well so that we can hear from a First Nations perspective, from all the First Nations in your area that are affected, so that we can move forward, so that we can actually implement a plan, something that is lacking from this government.

1740

To the Minister of Education, the point that I was trying to make in the comments I was making, specifically—you're absolutely right, this is going to benefit a lot of small businesses in Ontario. But the point I was trying to make as well was that the actions this government has taken with cuts to MNR and the cuts to ServiceOntario are devastating to northern Ontario, and they are hurting small business across northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise and have a few comments on Bill 105. The title of the bill actually is An

Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. But I have to comment and compliment the Liberal spin machine because, as many people have mentioned today, the short title of the act, section 6 of the bill, is the Supporting Small Businesses Act. That's what many people have called this bill.

I have to say, let's face it, there's a world of difference between introducing a bill and saying you support small business and actually supporting small business. When it comes to being supporters of the men and women whose businesses are really the backbone of Ontario's economy, the government has been, I suggest, the opposite of supportive. Their policies, whether you talk about energy, red tape or taxes, have made life more difficult, I suggest, for Ontario's small business owners.

We just finished a constituency week. When you're back in your ridings, people see you. They don't call it a constituency week; they call it a break week. I don't know that I had much of a break. I'm sure many of the government members went out and went to events in their ridings and talked to some small business owners. I know I was bombarded with a number of issues, and I have to say that the number one issue that I had with small business and with constituents was the latest hydro increase that the government has proposed. In the emails from small businesses and homeowners already struggling to pay their bills really, it was something I heard over and over again from people in my riding. Whether you're a small business owner, a farmer or a senior on a fixed income, the latest increase to pay for the sins of this government's outrageous gas plant scandal and outrageous green energy debacle has people just outraged. I wanted to make sure that I gave those people their due because I was just overrun with those comments. People stopped me at events, stopped me on the street corner and when I was in businesses. I have to say that there are a number of very positive constituents, people who are very optimistic, and even those people have turned sour on this government.

I want to quote one, because he sent me an email. His name is A.J. Benoit. He's a small business person from Brockville. Usually, when I get an email from A.J., it's to invite me to his latest community fundraising event or a concert he's involved in, but not so. Last week he wrote this:

"Steve,

"As a businessman, I get very upset at the way our provincial government continues to run the business at hand here in Ontario. Incompetent leadership, mismanagement and outright lies have been a common thread we have been living with over the past 10 years!"

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member for Leeds-Grenville to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Steve Clark: I apologize. I withdraw, Speaker.

"But this 'billion dollar' bill that the Ontario taxpayer is on the hook for is incomprehensible. If I or any other business person ran our business the way the provincial government does, we would be bankrupt in a week!

"It's inexcusable to expect the taxpayers to pay for the Liberals' incompetence. It is inexcusable for the Premier of this province to publicly state she takes full responsibility and accountability for the government's action, and our only compensation is an apology!"

The email continues: "Anyone in the private sector would have been fired! This government has no idea at all what accountability is. Accountability is to own up to the mistake and make it right. In other words, I want my money back. I am tired of paying for government incompetence."

"The 'Liberal' Party should be paying for this gross mistake, not the taxpayer. This is the straw that breaks the camel's back! It has been quite some time now I have been seriously considering leaving Ontario to live somewhere else, where the government has a better handle on running the province."

"The only thing keeping me here is the love of my community. If it weren't for the fact that I was born and raised in Brockville and have a love for my hometown, I'd leave Ontario in a heartbeat!"

"I am a very, very unhappy Ontarian; in fact, it is embarrassing to even admit I'm from Ontario!"

That's from my constituent. That's from a guy who's so positive about the community he's a community builder, and even he has lost confidence in this government.

The mood is reflected, also, in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's recent What Ontario Business Thinks quarterly survey. Less than half of the province's businesses surveyed are confident in Ontario's economy. We're talking about small businesses this afternoon, so it's interesting to note that the smaller the business, the less confident entrepreneurs are. While 49% of businesses with 100 or more employees are confident, that falls to 45% for those with 11 to 99 employees, and just 41% for those with fewer than 10 employees.

Now, you won't find a more optimistic group, I think, in communities than people who are involved in small businesses, so this survey, to me, was a real eye-opener. Even those sort of half-full people are not optimistic about this government and the way the economy is. But again, I can sympathize with them, because after 10 years of Liberal mismanagement, a track record of scandal and waste that has culminated in the shameful billion-dollar gas plant debacle, I can understand why some people have felt the way that they have and why businesses have now turned from that half-full mentality to not having confidence in this government or their ability to manage the economy.

We're dealing with small businesses, and I thought that I should set the table on a discussion about Bill 105 with some of those comments from small businesses. I think there's a recognition that, as some members have already stated, we're going to support this bill.

I happen to agree with my colleague from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound: It's a half measure. It's tinkering around the edges, but I think there is a recognition in 105 that there needs to be some tax relief for Ontario's

businesses. They desperately need some good news. I'm not going to go into the details because I think many members have today talked about the exemption, what it does to those businesses with payrolls under \$5 million and the fact that the exemptions change.

I only have a few minutes left. I do want to talk about some other issues in another letter that is quite long. The concern that that constituent has was the decision that, in January, independent contractors and owners of construction companies—small businesses—were forced to pay their own WSIB coverage.

I promised Sandra Howe of Athens, whose husband Keith is a general contractor, that I'd share their story and how it's affecting their family. Here's some of what she wrote to me:

"After a very emotional chat with my husband yesterday after work, I called workman's comp this morning, and they referred me to you."

"I was advised to email you to let you know not only our thoughts, but the thoughts of every self-employed contractor we speak to in the area."

"We were floored last year to get the info regarding WSIB and the amount that a general contractor has to pay. We understand that something had to be done because of all the 'under-the-table' activity, but the amount that comes out of our pockets quarterly is nothing less than robbery to those who have a small business."

"My husband came home yesterday and said every bit of profit we made this summer goes to WSIB. He was distraught, to say the least. I was shocked and sick to my stomach."

"The whole summer he worked for nothing. What is happening? He does everything right, and this? He said to me he will probably have to quit after all of these years of being self-employed and work again for someone else. He said if he doesn't take the commercial jobs there just is not enough work to keep going."

"When I called WSIB this morning, she listened to what I had to say and told me they get calls every day with the very same complaint, and this is not at all new—that the contractor's profit margin is totally eaten up with this payment, and that people are now going to their local MPP to ask for help."

"She said lobbying is or is going to be taking place and that at some point soon, hopefully the government is going to have to address this and seriously implement a new plan to help us."

This is from the folks at WSIB, saying this to one of my constituents.

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Sandra goes on:

"Something has to be done for the small or family businesses who are self-employed because they simply cannot lose this much out of their pocket. It is actually causing people to lose their livelihood."

"My husband was speaking to a contractor as recent as yesterday who actually has to turn work down on a daily basis because it is commercial. He is losing his shirt as well. It seems it is always the common thread in conversations."

"Please read this, Mr. Clark, and consider it. What can be done? \$9.10 on \$100.00 is far too much! We cannot afford to do any commercial work but can't afford not to.

"There has to be a solution for this."

Speaker, I know I'm going to take my two-minute summation. I'm going to get to more of this. Thank you for giving me this initial opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I certainly understand and sometimes even empathize with some of the frustration that the member from Leeds–Grenville has shared. But we are now two full years into this term of this Legislature and we've heard a lot of complaining, we've heard a lot of disgruntlement and a lot of frustration, but not too many solutions and not too many options to actually change or course correct. We started to hear a little bit of course correction talk when Bill 74 was thrown into the loop—the ominous bill, which is how we refer to it—but I think it's actually time for us to be very clear about where we are right now. You can either be part of the solution or you can stand on the sidelines. You can bring solutions to the table or you can stand and complain on the sidelines. What the people of the province expect is that we actually get something done. While Bill 105 is not perfect, once we get it to committee, in a minority setting, we are actually empowered—each one of us on that committee—to change it, to make it better, to make it stronger and to address all the issues that you've brought to the table.

It's frustrating because your leader is actually going out to the province saying there's a confidence motion and you can somehow make something happen. The only way that we're going to move forward is actually making sure something happens in the next few months before the budget, because it has a budget motion or a supply motion where this government may or may not fall.

I think it's incumbent on us to come to work and actually do the work, and get something done in committee session. That's where our energy is.

While some of us are very frustrated, it's becoming equally frustrating for the people of this province to see you do nothing, and us make them do their job. Let's do it together. Let's get something done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened with great interest to the speech from the member from Leeds–Grenville. You know what struck me, Mr. Speaker, is that there are lots of differences between this side of the House that side of the House. There are a lot of policy differences, there are a lot of ideological differences, but when it comes down to it, it's one of the themes that he talked about, and that's optimism. Over on this side of the House, we're optimistic about the future of this province. We're optimistic about our small business sector. We're optimistic about the economy and we want to partner with them. We see government as having a force for good.

When I heard that member's speech, when I hear that member and other members in question period and debates go on about this province, they talk about this province, which has been built and continues to be built by a lot of hard-working people, with the most pessimistic, dire tones you could hear. The fact of the matter is that we have a great small business sector in the province of Ontario. We should be celebrating it and we should be helping it.

That's what this bill does. This bill is targeted at helping more than 60,000 Ontario small businesses by lowering their taxes and promoting jobs and growth. I've had to sit here for the last 10 years and listen to that party go on and on and on about cutting taxes. Well, guess what? That's what this bill does.

It's time that we sent this bill to committee. We have now had eight hours of debate; 16 members have spoken at length. I think it's time that we sent this bill to committee, that we pass this bill and that we come together to make sure that small businesses get a break in this province.

We're sick of hearing the rhetoric over on that side of the House. We want some action. Help us send this bill to committee, help us pass this bill and help us support a strong small business sector in this province that, at least on this side of the House, we're very optimistic about.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member from Leeds–Grenville makes mention of what I consider the baby step that we see in Bill 105. It adds \$50,000 to a tax exemption that was introduced by Mike Harris, I think it was back in 1996.

We've been debating a baby step, and I know they want to try and wrap this up. I am looking forward to my opportunity to debate this legislation. The reason for that: We see no plan here beyond a baby step. There's no substantial plan or course of action—no mention of real tax policy. We've seen the tax policy of tax hikes over the last 10 years.

To be optimistic, we have a policy on taxation which encompasses not only business taxes but also income taxes and also consumption taxes, the HST. We're opposed to the Ontario College of Trades tax. We're very optimistic that changes can be made to labour legislation, changes that have been well overdue, going back probably to the 1940s; we're dealing with outdated apprenticeship ratios.

We're probably going to see a hike in WSIB premiums. We're probably going to see a hike in the minimum wage. We have seen a hike in the tax rate on what I describe as the maximum wage, where both parties got together and decided to, as they describe it, tax the rich at a rate of 49.5%. That's one of the highest tax rates in North America.

To be optimistic, we asked for an energy policy beyond blowing \$1.1 billion on the two gas plants. We would ask this government, after 10 years, stop creating rules and regulations and red tape that are suffocating small business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I wanted to contribute to the debate from the member for Leeds–Grenville. I’ve listened to the Liberals and the Conservatives. They’re optimistic, and they’re pessimistic. I think New Democrats have been sent here to actually do the job that we’re required to do.

When we talk about what has been accomplished in the last 10 years—you’re going back and forth. Liberals haven’t been listening to Conservatives for 10 years, and Conservatives haven’t been listening to the government for 10 years. Nobody’s listening to solutions of how to make people’s lives better. But there were some things that we implemented in this budget in the last two sessions that did make life better for Ontarians.

When we’re talking about taxes, one of the things that we introduced in the last session was that income earners of \$500,000 or more would have an increased tax amount—I think it was a 3% surtax. We didn’t hear a lot of grumbling back from those income earners because they wanted to contribute to the economy. They knew that they had to do their fair share, just like every hard-working Ontarian in Ontario is expected to do. Therefore, bringing this bill forward is a small step for small business to have some tax relief. It is going to help small businesses.

One member earlier alluded to having that and taking a trip to Florida. Not everybody’s priority is taking a tax credit and going to Florida. It could be paying off a bill that the small business has that is overdue. It could be having a very small amount where they could hire somebody part-time for a short time to get ahead of some of the paperwork or some of the duties that are in their small business office or shop.

Even though we’ve been debating this bill for—I heard—eight hours, it’s a democracy. We live with a democratic government. We have the right to debate as long as people want to stand up and speak about the bills before this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, so we return to the member for Leeds–Grenville to sum up.

Mr. Steve Clark: I’d like to thank the members who contributed in questions and comments: the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the government House leader, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk and the member for London–Fanshawe.

I want to thank Mr. Barrett, the member for Haldimand–Norfolk because he used the words “red tape that suffocates small business.” Certainly, that’s some of the comments that I heard from small businesses in my community over the constituency week. That was something that came out.

I think it was the member for Kitchener–Waterloo who spoke and talked about why we come to this place. We had a policy conference in London. I know we came back to this place and decided that we would take the Premier up on her offer to have a number of bills that we support and to clear the decks so that the government could present us their jobs plan.

I think this morning our leader, Tim Hudak, and our finance critic, Vic Fedeli, did a great job in question period again, challenging the government to put forward their jobs plan. The members opposite can talk about who is optimistic or pessimistic, but we’ve actually listened to what constituents told us during the last election and put up some policies for discussion. I think we proved, after our conference, that we wanted to clear the decks so that the government could show us if they had a plan.

I wanted, today, to put forward comments from A.J. Benoit and Sandra Howe about small businesses, but I’m afraid that the solution just isn’t Bill 105, or a government that pays lip service to supporting small business. I think the solution is to bring this tax-and-spend Liberal regime down and to put in place an Ontario PC government that’s going to truly respect business, large and small, that built this great province.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Chair / Président: Vacant

Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 22 October 2013

Mardi 22 octobre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 9, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure again to rise and to finish my time speaking to Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. You know, Speaker, it's actually quite fitting, as recycling seems to be the theme of the day. Yesterday, the Liberals announced a big, new initiative as they managed to say with a straight face that they will open government. They appear to have forgotten that they launched an open government portal a few years ago, but I guess it ended up in the trash like so many other Liberal promises.

At the end of the day, this Bill 91 ignores two main demands of the PC Party for a waste reduction policy. This bill does not remove the eco taxes, nor does it eliminate useless bureaucracy. In fact, Speaker, the bill opens the door to increased costs for both individuals and companies in the form of new taxes or fees.

Beyond that, it would actually increase bureaucracy—bigger government with more taxing power and less accountability. This is truly scary. It's a very scary thought, actually, for the taxpayers of Ontario.

Waste Diversion Ontario has, time and time again, broken the trust of taxpayers across this great province of ours. Their ongoing failure should not be rewarded with a significantly larger budget and increased power.

So as I wrap up today, Speaker, I would like to highlight our party's major concerns with this piece of legislation. First, it is unacceptable to members of this side of the House to increase the funding and authority of Waste Diversion Ontario. Slapping a new name on the sign on

the door just isn't enough. We should be reducing the size and cost of government to ensure our vital services are there when we need them.

Secondly, intermediary sections of the bill form an unnecessary interference in the market that will in fact end up driving up costs. The minister stated in his remarks that this bill seeks to "unleash the innovative energies of competition in the marketplace." Upon closer inspection, we see that this really isn't the case. These intermediary sections of the bill will hurt the market, limit competition and stifle innovation. They will do more harm than good and should be removed from the bill.

Thirdly, sections 44 and 45 of this bill will not be supported by our party. These sections pit municipalities against producers instead of bringing them to the table to find a solution that works for all sides. As the bill reads today, the waste authority would be permitted to impose new taxes and determine how much businesses will have to pay for the blue box program. We're concerned that this will only serve to entrench companies and municipalities instead of promoting co-operation.

Finally, when it comes to scrapping of eco taxes, the promise to maybe get around to cancelling them at some point in the future doesn't cut it. It's not good enough to leave the wind-down of this unpopular program to the whim of the minister. As we've seen over the past decade, you need to get a Liberal's word in writing to take it seriously. Even then it's a bit of a stretch. We've been told time and time again that issues are being looked into or that rules will be put in place, without being given any concrete details. When it comes to the eco tax scheme, we need it ended as soon as possible.

The people of Chatham-Kent-Essex are tired of picking up the slack for Liberal mismanagement. When this government needs a little extra cash to hush power companies during election time or for a last-minute \$500,000 gift to the friends of MLSE, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment, they raid the pockets of taxpayers all over the province. The good people of my riding have said enough is enough. We cannot afford to continue paying for your mistakes.

Handing the power to increase eco taxes to an unaccountable authority that the government will simply use to deflect criticism is not something that I personally can support. The Ontario PCs favour a much more straightforward approach to waste reduction. Speaker, under the Ontario PCs, the government would set realistic and achievable recycling targets, establish environmental standards and measure results. That's it, plain and simple.

On this side of the House, we actually believe that the Ministry of the Environment has the talent and personnel

needed to oversee recycling in the province. If the minister were only willing to place his confidence in the staff at his ministry, I'm sure they would prove that they are more than up to the task. At the same time, this would save the province tax dollars without compromising service quality. It's that kind of bold action that the people of this province expect, and demand, of their government. No need for additional boards, agencies or commissions. Set the targets, establish the rules of the game and simply measure the outcome. It's really that simple.

Back in November of last year, the Ontario PC Party presented a better way forward to protect our environment, lower costs for businesses and to treat recyclable materials, not as waste but as valuable resources that we should recover and recycle into new products. With products such as tires, the market was able to yield a better recycling percentage than the current regime at a lower cost to Ontario taxpayers. By getting government out of the way of innovation and competition, we would allow the entrepreneurs and trailblazers of this province to revitalize.

At the end of the day, Speaker, this bill ignores two main demands of the PC Party for waste reduction and policy. It does not remove the eco taxes, nor does it eliminate useless bureaucracy. As I wind down, again I want to suggest that Bill 91 isn't a bill that we, on this side of the House, can support.

0910

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to say that I'm happy to comment on the comments by the member for Chatham-Kent-Essex on the Waste Reduction Act.

One of the things we have to keep in mind when we're talking about waste reduction is that it's good for the environment and it's good for communities and it's good for families. When we're going to reduce our waste and take that responsibility of making sure that landfills don't continue to keep overflowing, we're looking after the next generation. So, Speaker, this a bill that we need to make sure gets passed in this House so it can go to committee and we can work on this bill and ensure that waste reduction is done responsibly by companies, and that consumers are aware, when they purchase an item at a store or a retailer, that they know that producer is going to dispose of that item responsibly.

So those costs about eco fees that the member was talking about are things that are going to have to be incurred, and that should be dealt with responsibly by the industry, so that when consumers go to buy their item, they're not going to walk out of the store and get another bill for that service to make sure it's disposed of. So something the industry does have to address is the eco fees and how to responsibly dispose of items.

Speaker, it's about progress when we talk about our environment and reducing waste. I was actually reading something last night about how apartment units—multi-residential units—are better at waste reduction and leave less of a carbon print as well, and also how multi-unit

residents actually use less hydro. It was very interesting. I was reading it in one of the renters' magazines we get at our office.

Saying that as well, there are other issues we can look at about waste reduction: maybe affordable housing so that people do have an alternative for living as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to pass comments on the comments that were made by the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex. Frankly, I didn't hear anything in those comments that would lead me to believe that Bill 91 is not a bill that should be supported.

I think that today, modern business practices tell us that product stewardship, despite what has happened in the past and the awful job the opposition party did when they were in power—I think that now, when you look at modern economies around the world that have kept pace with consumer interest in ensuring that product stewardship is something that is built into a product during the lifecycle of that product, the cost to produce that product is taken into account and also the reality of the cost to dispose of that product at the end of its life cycle.

I spent 18 years on local council dealing with waste issues, dealing with recycling issues, often with a government that was more in the way than of any assistance. I see these changes to be very financially and environmentally sound. They're the sort of changes that the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario has asked us to take. The opposition parties themselves, over the years, have said there are changes that should be made to the old waste diversion system.

Bill 91, I think, takes into account the modern realities of business today; that is, if you produce a product and you sell that product to the consumer, you should at the same time be thinking: What is the end of life for that product? What's going to happen to that product at the end of its life? By including the fees in the actual price of the product, you actually incent those companies to be more economical, to be more effective and more accountable to ensure that that product is dealt with in a way that's safe and responsible so that we know we're not leaving a bad legacy for those people who are coming after.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? The member for Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and good morning to you. It's a pleasure to rise and bring comments on the presentation by my good friend from Chatham-Kent-Essex on Bill 91.

Before I get started on my reaction to his comments, I would just like to say what a great job Quinte Waste Solutions is doing in the Quinte region in eastern Ontario. They're the local provider, or collector, I guess—collecting agency—of recyclable materials, and they are the best in Ontario. So there you go. But there's a lot of work to be done outside of the Quinte region. They're the shining example of how things should be done when it comes to this.

Just a few comments for my friend Mr. Nicholls here. He's right on the money: Bill 91 is going to actually kill jobs in the province of Ontario. If the member from Oakville wants to know why we're not supporting this bill, that's the main reason why. We're talking about creating jobs in Ontario, and this bill is taking us in the wrong direction; it's actually killing jobs. It's going to create some public sector jobs, which is what we've seen from this Liberal government over the last 10 years. Some 300,000 manufacturing jobs have left the province of Ontario, and what have we created? Some 300,000 more public sector jobs. Who's paying for those jobs? It's the people of Ontario, the taxpayers in this province. We simply can't afford to continue to build bigger and bigger bureaucracies like this government has done—and they're doing the exact same thing now with Bill 91.

You know what? All we have to do as a government is set the targets, achievable and realistic targets, for industry to meet. These products have a value, whether they're tires or old electronics or the tin cans. They have a very significant value on the market, and these companies exist that will look after these and take care of these products.

We need to do better in the province of Ontario, not create more bureaucracy. That's what this bill does.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure for me to respond to the comments from the member from Chatham-Kent. As the critic for economic development, I think this is actually a step in the right direction for creating jobs. It's not surprising that the Conservatives once again stand up and say absolutely nothing and say no, because that's the kind of fear-mongering that is consistently coming from that side of the House.

Let's review what the experts actually say—who are definitely not on that side of the House. The Ontario Waste Management Association says that with every thousand tonnes of materials diverted, it generates 7.3 full-time-equivalent jobs, \$711,000 in GDP and \$360,000 in wages. The economic benefits are four times greater than the net cost to recycle.

Instead of standing up in this House and saying that this proposed bill will kill jobs, I think that we actually have to be honest about the missed opportunities. We share your frustration that in the last 20 years the progress on waste reduction and recycling has stalled. In fact, Ontario has one of the worst records. Instead of standing up and just saying no, why don't you support it? Why don't you get it to committee? Why don't we make it better and stronger together? Actually, there are some tangible ways that we can do that in committee, because it's a minority government and the people of the province sent a minority government to this place to try to get some things done.

The environmental benefits of waste diversion are significant as well. I think that on the environmental perspective, on the economic development perspective, we all have a responsibility to make this portfolio successful.

I look forward to further debate and hearing from the member from Welland on this issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'd like to thank the members from London-Fanshawe, Oakville, Prince Edward-Hastings and, of course, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo for their rather bold comments and statements.

I thought, when I heard "the experts"—she didn't tell us who the experts were, so I guess anybody can be an expert.

Actually, Bill 91, the waste reduction environment act—there seems to be a main theme here, and that main theme—I talked earlier about how it is pitting municipalities against producers. It's kind of like the wind turbines, where they are pitting neighbour against neighbour and creating all kinds of havoc. It is a job-killer bill, and of course we don't stand for something along that line.

Again, I'd like to make reference to people who are perhaps watching this at home. Don't be fooled. Under Bill 91, you're going to continue to pay massive eco fees to fund redundant Liberal bureaucracies. This is a bureaucracy that we feel is not needed.

Truth be known, as much as I do respect the Minister of the Environment for who he is, I can't in good conscience support Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, in its current form.

0920

I heard the member from Kitchener-Waterloo mention how the people of Ontario put us here to get things done in a minority government. The only thing I see happening in this minority government right now is a coalition that is alive and well. That particular coalition is stifling—

Interjections.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Now we've got him a little bit upset—must be hitting a nerve.

It's killing creativity, and it's killing innovation in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Acting government House leader.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. You're doing a great job this morning. On behalf of the Minister of the Environment, Mr. Bradley, and his wonderful bill, Bill 91, I would certainly like debate to continue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's a pleasure for me to rise today to speak to this Bill 91 issue. Bill 91 is a step in the right direction, I believe. I want to start by thanking all the members who have been insightful in their comments around Bill 91, particularly the critic for our party, the member from Davenport.

The current system of waste management is not working in this province, and it needs to be fixed. The burden is on municipalities and it's on taxpayers. This bill addresses the fact that we need to recruit producers to help solve our waste management problems. It all starts in the beginning, at the production level: If we produce less waste, we have less waste to divert and less to manage. Innovation is key to realizing a zero-waste goal.

First we have to prioritize the three Rs. I think we always forget about that first one: We have to reduce before we reuse and before we recycle, and we create a process where there's less to manage, making it easier to manage. This kind of reminds me of my nursing days and the five Rs: the right dose, the right patient, the right—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, the same kind of theme.

In the past, we've shifted the burden of the responsibilities to municipalities and to taxpayers. They simply don't have the resources or the capability to solve all of the waste issues in this province. To the credit of municipalities, they have made significant infrastructure investments in waste collection. They're well-placed on curbside collection and other convenient waste diversion options for households, and they have shown themselves to be efficient collectors of waste. I'm pretty familiar with this because I actually sat as a city councillor, as a mayor and as a regional politician, and I sat on the waste management planning steering committee at the region of Niagara. However, we cannot continue to place the majority of the burden on municipalities and on the taxpayer. It's not a sustainable model.

This bill proposes shifting responsibility to the producer, and that's the right direction. This is where innovations are actually going to happen. If waste management will affect the bottom line of a producer, they'll look for new and efficient ways to make processes more efficient and financially viable. I don't know about you—my colleagues have probably experienced this—but when you go and purchase, I don't know, something that isn't even breakable, and you open up the box and it's got Styrofoam, it's got cardboard, and it's got this fancy box. In reality, it probably could have had some shrink wrap around it, and that would have sufficed to protect the product.

In this House, we talk about our wish to create jobs and to improve the economy, and this is one of those opportunities. Our member from Kitchener–Waterloo spoke about that in the two-minute hit, about the fact that Bill 91 will actually create some jobs that we sorely need. If we work together in this House instead of working against each other, and we bring this bill to committee and we make some important amendments, we can create a system that will not only serve to strengthen our waste management system but also, more importantly I think, our economy.

Right now this bill is just a scenario. I've seen it so many times in my two years here. The government brings forward a bill that is a step in the right direction, but it doesn't go quite far enough. The PCs oppose it because

they can't be seen as propping up the government, as they say. The NDP want to work together to make the bill better and deliver results that our constituents expect. It's like clockwork. It happens with every bill.

At this point, the PCs have to realize that no matter how much foot-stomping or nickel-spitting they do, an election isn't about to happen. Bill 91 is not going to create a confidence motion or a non-confidence motion. So let's take a step back, make the most of this bill, pass it and get it into committee, where we can actually make some amendments to it.

We need ideas from all three parties on how we can improve our waste management system. This isn't an opportunity for a political game. It's an opportunity to change the way our province works and to improve a system that has proven to fall short of what we actually need in this province. We have a chance here to work collectively towards a common goal: waste reduction.

We can all agree that the current system isn't working and we need to fix it. So how do we fix it? As I said, I've been involved at municipal levels with respect to this. It's not a sustainable system, and it's time to address the situation. Ontario has the worst diversion record in the country: 75% of our waste goes to landfills, 23% gets diverted, 2% is recovered. But the good thing is, we know why. We aren't starting from scratch. We have seen the system fail, so we can learn, from those failings, what's wrong with the current system.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, producers have fought against government regulations on refillable containers, for example. Because producers weren't responsible for their own waste, they were only worried about the bottom line of their production costs, and it ended there. They also weren't responsible in terms of who was paying the freight, who was actually paying the money, and that was the taxpayers of this province.

In 1987, the Ontario government, with Minister Bradley as the environment minister once again, reached an agreement that allowed soft-drink producers to dismantle a 100% producer responsibility system of deposit refund and refillable containers, in return for a blue box program. So we are one of the few provinces without a deposit return program for beverage containers.

I can tell you that I lived in Alberta 30 years ago, and there was a deposit return system there for beer bottles, alcohol bottles, two-litre plastic bottles. You name it; they collected them and they got returned. Here we are, 35 years later, and we still don't have that system up and running.

We've forgotten the hierarchy of the three Rs. "Reduce" is first, because if you prioritize reduction, it lessens the extent to which you have to rely on reuse and recycle. It may cost more to manufacture and produce refillable containers and innovate to discover new forms of packaging, but as we've seen, the effects of creating the cheap, garbage packaging that we've been producing for many years has ended up costing municipalities and taxpayers more money than they need to spend.

According to the Environmental Commissioner in 2010, the current programs "do not encourage producers

to focus on waste reduction first, reuse second and recycling third.... there is no direct financial incentive provided to individual producers to reduce their costs through product design, such as designing a product that is easier and cheaper to recycle. The lack of ... financial incentives to improve product design can be an impediment" to getting to that zero waste.

Enforcement is another huge issue. The government currently lacks the authority and the oversight to set clear targets and to fine companies who don't meet them. In order for the responsibility of waste management to shift to the producer, government oversight and authority is necessary.

Industry-funded organizations have tended to serve industry's interests, keeping costs to producers down, rather than the public interests of minimizing waste and ensuring that producers cover 100% of the end-life management costs. Funding for blue box programs has fallen on cash-strapped municipalities, meaning that programs are too limited and not convenient enough for families.

0930

When you look at various municipalities across the province or even across the country, the way that the recycling and the blue box programs are set up are very inconvenient for families. Depending on your municipality, sometimes the grey box goes one week, the blue box goes the next week; sometimes they only pick up twice a month. It's very confusing for people. They have to separate all of the articles, so the cardboard has to be a certain size and it has to be wrapped in twine; the plastic has to be in one box; the newspapers have to be in the grey box. It's very time-consuming and very confusing for families who are just trying to get their kids to school and get themselves to work. There are other jurisdictions, however, that use a blue bag, and you can put everything but the kitchen sink into that bag and it gets sorted at some facility. Those jurisdictions are places that actually have a higher rate of diversion, where that kind of stuff is done in a facility, which also creates jobs.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Because it makes it easy.

Ms. Cindy Forster: That's right; it makes it very easy.

A quote from the Ontario Waste Management Association talking about the oversight and enforcement: We heard from the Tories this morning that the bill is just setting up a new bureaucracy for government and it's going to create a whole bunch of public sector jobs. It may create a few, and I'm glad, actually, that public sector jobs are available, because with the loss of all the manufacturing jobs that we've had in this province, at least the public sector jobs are paying a living wage to people.

The quote from waste management is: "The lack of proper oversight and enforcement of recycling standards in stewardship programs has been an area of continued concern." This is from the Ontario Waste Management Association. "Under the proposal, producers would provide much of the oversight and enforcement of the Waste Reduction Act through commercial and contractual ar-

rangements. The concern is, producers have financial and political interests that may not always align with rigorous oversight, enforcement and the achievement of all the benefits foreseeable under the new act. [It] indicates that the new enforcement regime is fatally deficient as it fails to provide any oversight and compliance function relative to recycling standards for waste service providers for designated materials. Producers should not be made to be enforcers of waste reduction or waste service standards vis-à-vis waste service providers. If these standards are worth enforcing, they are worth enforcing directly against all parties who are responsible for carrying them out, including waste service providers."

We've seen in other sectors, such as unlicensed day-cares, how toothless some government policies and inspections actually are, so here we are going into a new bill and I don't think that we want to be giving this enforcement over to producers.

You know, time runs along very quickly. I'm going to just move now a bit to my area in the province, the Niagara region.

There are three ways to deal with waste in our province: the waste that goes to landfills, the waste that goes to gasification and the waste that goes to incineration. In all three of those cases, most people who live in municipalities—it's a "not in my backyard" kind of thing, NIMBYism. People don't want a landfill in their backyard. Fortunately or unfortunately, I have one. I actually have one in my riding of Welland; I have a landfill. That landfill was operated by the city of Welland for many years, and then there was a triple majority vote at the region and the region took on responsibility for waste management back in the mid-1990s.

At the moment, the region of Niagara is trying to get a lift, an elevation, of that landfill site. Most of the landfills have closed across the Niagara region, and all of that waste is coming either to Welland or it's going to Grimsby. Grimsby landfill—they were kind of smart in their negotiations with the Niagara region; they put a clause in where they would only accept garbage from three surrounding municipalities as well as their own. Welland, at the end of the day, is actually getting the waste from across the whole of Niagara region to this landfill site.

This site, had it been left for Welland alone, would have lasted our municipality for 100 years. But because of the large tonnage that is coming in there, it's about to close as well, in 2016, unless the environment assessment approves this lift. I can tell you, the people who live around that landfill site, the Welland south people—one of the oldest parts of the city—they're not interested in having a lift. So that's another reason why this bill is so important, because if we would divert more, our landfill sites that are there will at least last a few years longer.

I want to spend my last five minutes, though, talking about a meeting that I was at yesterday. I had the pleasure yesterday of actually meeting with Todd Case, county warden from the county of Lambton. Our leader, Andrea Horwath, and I actually met with Todd, and we met with John Innes, the general manager, and Ronald Van Horne, the chief administrative officer. They asked the leader of

the third party and myself if we would actually try and get a couple of their issues into this debate, because they haven't been getting much traction from their meetings with the government.

So the first issue—and this is related, Speaker, to waste diversion. It's actually kind of a recycling plan. They have a proposed green energy project for the Twin Creeks landfill in the township of Warwick, where they want to use the gas, the methane gas, that is produced from their landfill site to produce energy.

Now, they've been talking about this plan—I want to say up front that they said, when the landfill actually opened in this area, they were not a willing host. So it was this kind of NIMBYism kind of thing. Since then, their community has kind of come on side, and they're very interested in this gas-to-energy project.

They asked me if I would actually bring this up here, because they have been meeting with the government about this, I think, since about 2010, and they don't seem to be getting much traction. There is no kind of application process for them to apply to at this point. There is kind of no criteria under the Ministry of Energy for them to even get this moved along.

They tell me that when this landfill site, which is 725 acres of land located—it employs 14 staff and seasonal construction workers. The site is fully operational, and the community strongly supports the proposal. They tell me that, at its peak, there would be enough power produced to power 7,200 homes.

Now, that isn't necessarily their plan. Their plan would be to produce enough energy to actually attract some industry, because the landfill site is adjacent to their industrial park. So they would use this power and give industry a reduction in power rates, and that, in itself, would hopefully attract some business to their area.

I said that I would use some of my time here, because this is really kind of a good-news story. With provincial approval of a landfill site, methane gas is now at a point that they could achieve green energy production, but they don't seem to be getting any responses to their plans from the Liberal government, so they hope that if we actually got this physically on the record, they might get some responses from the Liberals.

Ms. Catherine Fife: What's the holdup? Come on.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't know what the holdup is.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Seriously—50 green jobs. Real jobs, not fake jobs.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes, that's right: 50 real jobs—real jobs paying real money.

The second issue that they asked me to raise—it's related, as well, to landfilling. It's about the taxes that municipalities actually get for landfills in their areas. I can tell you, it's a pittance. The taxes that municipalities actually get I think need to be addressed. I understand that there are some negotiations, or some discussions, going on with MPAC at this point in time, but they also have been going on for a couple of years.

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I also understand that some of the municipalities have come up with a new way to value landfills in municipal-

ities that would properly compensate them and their municipalities for having landfills on their site and for having trucks running through their towns 10 or 12 times a day. I know that MPAC is one of those arm's-length agencies, but I think that the government also needs to try and assist municipalities by moving this along and making sure that they are appropriately compensated for having landfill sites in their municipalities.

I'll just close by saying that this week is Waste Reduction Week in Niagara. It's a week when residents can learn more about waste reduction. I think that's part of what this bill needs as well. We need to have more education and more awareness about waste reduction, about reuse and about recycling. The Niagara region is giving residents a chance to find out what happens to all the waste materials that are collected at the curb. They're offering guided tours. It begins now, and it's on until November 9. There's also a drop-off location for reusable goods, and residents are invited to tweet the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry; the time has expired. Comments and questions.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased today to speak to Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. During the debate, as it has gone on, it's quite clear that inside here, we all agree that the current system is flawed, and there's a consensus that we need to do something different. That's why we have the Waste Reduction Act.

The most important principle in the Waste Reduction Act, I think, is that producers become financially and economically accountable for recycling the goods they sell in Ontario. This is important because it puts rigour into the system. It creates an environment for innovation, for reduction of packaging, for using different methods to package and sell products.

The other things that are key in this act are that it's going to boost recycling in the industrial, commercial and institutional sector, starting actually with paper and packaging waste, which is something which fills up our landfills; we all know that. We do know the success of the blue box program, which is another important aspect of this bill. It's going to create greater producer funding for the blue box program, which is going to ease the burden on municipal taxpayers and municipalities. It will also improve oversight and accountability of recycling by clearly defining the roles and responsibilities of the individual producers, the provincial government, the municipalities and a new Waste Reduction Authority.

The other thing about recycling is that it creates jobs. Recycling products creates more jobs than just dumping them into a landfill.

I'm encouraged by the debate that we're having in the House. I'm glad to stand in support of Bill 91.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Michael Harris: I think it's important to lay out on the line here some of the facts that the members beside me and perhaps opposite haven't been listening to over the course of this debate. I think it's important that we talk about jobs, talk about the fact that the Liberals'

best attempt to come up with a job strategy is actually saddling industry and manufacturing with a half a billion dollars in new costs every year.

That's not a jobs plan, Speaker. You know what? To create a job in the waste management industry, the Liberals actually think, and they're supported by their friends in the NDP, that they need to kill thousands of jobs in the manufacturing sector. This view of the economy shows why the Liberals have, in fact, lost 300,000 good manufacturing jobs over the last 10 years.

Of course, the Liberals' partner in crime, the NDP, supports creating a half a billion dollars in new costs for Ontario's manufacturing sector. That means that NDP supports killing jobs in factories and cities across Ontario like Hamilton, London and Kitchener. Not only that; they support forcing hundreds of millions of dollars onto the backs of consumers, who are already saddled with high fees and costs that they've incurred over the last 10 years. We've outlined numerous amounts of those.

Just for the record, we put forward a plan. We're not stomping our feet on the ground; we're proposing—in fact, last November, we talked about how we would create jobs in the recycling industry without sacrificing Ontario's manufacturing sector. We would start that by scrapping the Liberal eco tax program—one that, of course, the NDP supports—and eliminate the government's useless recycling bureaucracy.

We believe that businesses should do their part to recover and recycle materials into new products, but rather than create complicated bureaucracy and massive new costs for consumers, we would simply create the right conditions for economic growth. We would do this by having the environment industry set measurable and achievable recycling targets for certain materials, establish environmental standards, measure the outcomes and enforce the rules. That's it, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the 20-minute comments from my colleague from Welland on what this bill can actually accomplish and why it's so important, and why it's so important not to just stand by and, yes, not necessarily stomp, but not put forward any solutions. When you actually don't participate in the process, you can't make it stronger at committee. Anyway, we're going to try to do that, because we actually feel that that's our responsibility.

You just heard—if you were listening—the member from Welland comment on a very progressive municipality, Lambton, that has come to the government. Now, they haven't necessarily been listened to by the government, but it's a minority government; we can help them out. They have a jobs proposal around harnessing the methane gas, which is now at a point to achieve green energy production. So you have progressive voices across the province who want leadership and action on waste diversion. I'm really happy that member from Welland brought up this particular example. We have an issue with methane gas in landfills because we have not had leadership on this portfolio for 20 years.

The province of Ontario landfills 9.4 million tonnes of waste a year; 5.4 million tonnes were deposited in Canadian landfills, and then we sent another 4 million tonnes to US landfills. In some ways we are actually exporting jobs. Landfills emit millions of tonnes of methane annually, a greenhouse gas significantly more potent than carbon dioxide.

You have a municipality here that has found a green solution to deal with the methane that will also attract jobs to the region of Chatham and create green jobs, and then you even have the municipality onside so you don't have to move gas plants around like chess pieces.

So let's listen to the progressive voices at the municipal level. Let's get this bill to committee, and let's make it stronger.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was very pleased to hear of the very constructive approach that the member for Welland has taken in her remarks. It is very encouraging to see that.

There was some considerable—I won't say unprecedented; that's probably too strong a word—consultation that went on before the legislation was presented to the House or even constructed. We really thought the Ontario Waste Management Association, which encompasses a lot of groups, were particularly helpful in their suggestions. I consulted as well with the critics from the New Democratic Party and from the Conservative Party to receive their ideas. I would like to see this bill as one which is a bill of the House rather than any particular minister or any particular government. I think a lot of legislation would be beneficial if we took that approach.

Whenever you bring forward legislation of this kind, you're going to have people with a vested interest—and I don't say that in a negative sense—who are going to come to all of us and say, "Well, if you do this, it will be detrimental to our particular group," and you're going to see that happen. What you have to do is try to look at the total picture of how it will affect Ontario. A Waste Management Authority would be an authority which is financed by the producers; that is, those who actually produce the waste in the first place, rather than from the grateful taxpayers at large.

I want to address one comment that comes up quite often, and that is the idea of refillables. In their five years in power, the New Democratic Party did not change to that, and for a very good reason. What happens if you go to a totally refillable system is you take that which is valuable out of the blue box and the blue box is much less attractive. That's why Ruth Grier and Bud Wildman and others would not have done it on that occasion.

Thanks to all the members for their help in this regard.
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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Welland has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the members from Ottawa South, Kitchener—Waterloo, Kitchener—Conestoga and St. Catharines for their comments.

I think I just want to spend this two minutes talking about: Where do we go from here? There seems to be a concern that there's a trend of moving government decisions out of the public realm. I heard the member from St. Catharines talking about that there has been considerable consultation, but generally when there is consultation, it's the people who have a vested interest or who have deeper pockets that attend those consultations. Many individuals and groups lack the resources or the knowledge to participate in that.

There's also a concern that there will be significant delays in getting the regulations in place and that it's moving far too slowly already. Given that there has been all this consultation, there's no need to delay moving forward, getting regulations in place and making sure that we quickly have this process in place to make sure that the waste is being diverted immediately and not five years down the road.

So often, people have narrow interests that are served by weak regulations. We're certainly proposing that those regulations need to be strong and that we need to serve the broader public interest—the people that are paying the taxes every day in this province.

Thanks for the opportunity to speak to Bill 91.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to rise again and speak to Bill 91.

Before I begin my remarks, let me just tell you this brief story that I came across while I was at the Quinte Sports Centre in Belleville over the weekend. I was standing with a bunch of parents who had children on the ice for a hockey practice. They were headed to Syracuse, in the next couple of weeks, for a friendly matchup with the team from Syracuse. One of the dads was there, and he was planning his trip to Syracuse. While he was in Syracuse, what he was going to do was plan a visit at a tire shop in Syracuse, a garage down there, so that he could get four brand new tires on his vehicle.

Keep in mind: Syracuse is not in Ontario. Syracuse is in northeastern New York. It's quite a distance from Belleville, I might add. It's about two and a half hours, probably, to get this done. I can tell you, I live in the Quinte region in Belleville, and there are a lot of garages in the Belleville area that would be happy to put tires on that vehicle, but this gentleman had done his research and he told me that he was going to save \$200 if he went down to Syracuse to get the tires on his vehicle changed. I just want you to keep that story in mind as I move along in my remarks on why Bill 91 is a bad thing for the province of Ontario.

The minister just said moments ago that there are special interests or people with vested interests, but we have to look at the greater good for all of Ontario. I can tell you, if people like this individual are heading down to Syracuse or Watertown or maybe across the border to Gatineau, or down in Windsor they're heading over to Detroit, and in Sarnia, across the bridge there into Michigan—this is happening all over the province. The reason

that this is happening is because it's cheaper. It's cheaper to go across the border. And why is it cheaper? It's because of the decisions that have been made by this government over the last 10 years, and now we have another one that's going to potentially kill more jobs. I want you to think about that story as I move through my remarks here on Bill 91.

It is almost laughable if it wasn't sad to think that this government is calling this a jobs bill. As a matter of fact, it is a jobs bill: It's a job-killer bill. While we may create a few jobs, a handful of jobs, in the public sector to go out and police these kinds of activities, how many jobs in the private sector are we going to kill in retail, in manufacturing, in industry? They're going to disappear, because people are going to start to go south of the border, or they're going to buy on the Internet, which is happening when it comes to our electronics, and they're not having to pay these eco fees or eco taxes.

This bill is creating more government employees. There's no doubt about it. They're creating a larger bureaucracy, as I mentioned earlier this morning. Their own Ministry of Finance, on the Liberal side—their documents show that 122,000 of those jobs, or a city roughly the size of Kingston, are government employees. When you've effectively turned government into the only growth industry in the province, it's pretty easy to create jobs. All you have to do, if you're the government, is cut another cheque. Keep in mind, though: Our bank account is pretty much empty.

The Auditor General laid out in pretty stark terms exactly how easy these guys on the other side of the House find it to write a cheque. In the words of one member of the press, when it came to the cancelled Oakville power plant, the government “wrestled TransCanada to the ceiling” during negotiations—a \$1.1-billion boondoggle and a waste of money for taxpayers in Ontario.

No one that I've spoken to about this Bill 91 is denying the fact that individual producer responsibility is a laudable goal for both the government and industry to move toward. It's called IPR, individual producer responsibility. There are very different ideas about how we get there.

But this has all the hallmarks of being another major Liberal boondoggle. First of all, check one: create an unaccountable government bureaucracy with enforcement authority and an unknown budget—check. That's what they've done here.

Let's go to number two on the checklist: balloon the size of the public sector by creating dozens of new government employees—check. And I would suggest that “dozens” may be a little bit conservative.

Number three: harass, harangue and interfere with the operation of small businesses—check. We've seen this time and time again from this government. They're making it impossible for businesses to do business in the province of Ontario. We saw last week a story come out about the College of Trades, and our member from Simcoe North asked a question yesterday about the fact that the College of Trades now has cops, essentially, that

are going out there and demanding another tax from small businesses. We are just absolutely harassing our small businesses in this province, and it can't continue or we're not going to have any business left here.

All of that, that I just mentioned—and I haven't even hit on the eco fees yet. Up until now, these eco taxes have been on the receipts of consumers, and that's caused some backlash against the government because when they go to the till or they go to the retail counter, it does, as a matter of fact, say "eco tax." Not a day seems to go by when a constituent isn't contacting my office, my constituency office in Belleville, or they send me a message on Facebook or Twitter about the eco fee that they just paid on a television set or, as I illustrated earlier, with a set of new tires for their vehicle. For a television set, they're paying \$40 to \$50 in an eco fee.

Parts of my riding are home to a large population of seniors. One of the great retirement areas in Ontario is in Prince Edward–Hastings. For anyone on a fixed income, every little bit counts, and that eco tax just digs a little deeper.

This government, rather than continuing to own eco taxes, has decided to simply bury them in the price so that consumers direct their anger at the business owner for what they think is an inflated price instead of at the government that's actually responsible for imposing that price.

I touched earlier on the creation of a sizable new bureaucracy as well to enforce this policy. Really, it wouldn't be a Liberal idea unless the money was being wasted somewhere, Madam Speaker. While no one is all that happy with the current set-up under Waste Diversion Ontario, the proposed set-up creating the Waste Reduction Authority has the potential to be a lot worse than what we're experiencing now.

As I stated earlier, we've got a brand new bureaucracy that's been left totally unaccountable. This is from the same government that brought you Ornge, Madam Speaker. The government plans to give this agency enforcement powers with the authority to set and collect fees from businesses which will then be passed on to consumers as part of the eco tax displayed on a product's price tag.

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There are some far-reaching powers granted to this new agency as well. Not only will it have the power to impose and collect fees from producers; it has the ability to expand its own scope of affected products and employ inspectors who are mandated to impose fines rather than ensure compliance, and it will also function as a dispute resolution mechanism. So you've got a self-funding government bureaucracy, with no oversight, that has the power to tax, fine, inspect and resolve disputes.

It amazes me, Madam Speaker, that after eHealth and after Ornge and after the Pan Am Games stories that have started to trickle out, and all the other scandals that this government has wasted money on, no one else seems to see the incredible potential abuse in creating another government agency with that broad a scope of authority.

But our friends from the NDP choose to bury their heads in the sand and continue to support these ideas that I know they know, in their heart of hearts, are going to end up as another Liberal boondoggle. At some point, throwing good money after bad has to sound like a bad idea to somebody other than us here in the Progressive Conservative Party. But then again, this government has yet to meet a cheque that it wouldn't cut, or couldn't cut, and leave to the taxpayers to pay for afterward.

What oversight is suggested by the bill is put entirely in regulation, which, as we all know, is code for "red tape" in the province. Currently, Ontario's small and large businesses face over 380,000 different pieces of regulation and red tape. The province has over 630 agencies, boards and commissions now, and those agencies, boards and commissions have increased by 300% under the current government. Only this government could think that one more is going to make a difference.

We have regimes that work right now in Ontario, we have regimes in Ontario that need to be fixed, and this bill takes neither into account. It's only taking a bad situation and making it worse. There's no mention of existing best practices, no mention of reducing cost to consumers. This is a way for this government to be seen to be doing something. It's meant to take a little heat off the government when it comes to eco taxes.

Just remember my story, Madam Speaker, about the gentleman going to buy tires in—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I have to say that my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings has raised a good point in the fact that oversight is an issue that I think we need to turn our minds to. Though I support Bill 91 in the sense that it's moving in the right direction, there are certainly things we can improve on, and one area in particular is this notion of oversight.

We have seen time and time again in other areas, in other services, in other sectors of this government that oversight simply hasn't been done, and the examples are plentiful—for example, Ornge and eHealth—so I think we must turn our minds to it.

I think, as a party, we've been proactive in this, in that, instead of retroactively looking at mistakes we've made—which is important, and which is what the Auditor General does—we also need to be proactive, which is why the Financial Accountability Office will provide some assistance.

Specifically with respect to this, we have an opportunity now, when this bill goes to committee, to ensure we have proper steps and proper legislation in place that will ensure that this new organization, the Waste Reduction Authority, does receive the proper oversight and does have the proper accountability mechanisms. We can do that now. We have the opportunity to prevent anything from happening in the future, so let's take the advantage of having seen other organizations and the mistakes that have been made, in the sense of lack of oversight, and ensure that we implement those protections now.

But I think that to suggest this bill is going to kill jobs or is a job killer isn't accurate, given what we know about waste and the way we're handling waste now. We need to address this issue. It's something that has been 20 years unaddressed and in the making. Moving forward on this, I think we can certainly improve the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I was intrigued by the comments this morning of my friend from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Now, if somebody in his riding is looking for a tire deal, let me tell you about one. Trevor Dodds has a little operation in Mount Pleasant, Ontario. I just brought four brand new Cooper tires from him for my Jeep, and I also got a rebate. When I did that investigation of tire prices, they're amongst the lowest in Ontario. So I want to encourage his constituents: Trevor Dodds in Mount Pleasant. Trevor will give you a heck of a deal: four new Cooper tires for a real value. So, Trevor, there's business to be done right there, and I encourage the member from Prince Edward–Hastings to send his constituent there.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Even though the federal government raised the limit you can bring back.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The Minister of the Environment is absolutely correct. But let me tell you: The safe handling of tires is very important. The Minister of the Environment will know that, back in the late 1980s, we had the famous Hagersville tire fire, which had a tremendous economic impact in the greater Hamilton area. We've got to make sure that we have proper disposal of tires in the province of Ontario to avoid the Hagersville problem. In fact, a company in Cambridge, Ontario, takes those tires and turns them into recycled material. Let me tell you: The new artificial surface at Trent University in Peterborough is made up of those recycled tires. That's a great way to recycle that particular product.

Just while I'm talking about Peterborough, I'll get a couple of plugs in today. Just recently, the city of Peterborough was recognized as having the highest diversion rate of any city in the province of Ontario—a very important tribute to Mayor Bennett and his team in Peterborough. Just recently, we've taken the methane gas from the Bedford landfill site and we're now turning that into electricity.

I just want to highlight all the good things that are going on in my riding of Peterborough. Bill 91 will continue to push those forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comment?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I appreciate providing some feedback on Bill 91, particularly related to my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings' excellent presentation. I'm really pleased that he raised the concerns about how much of Bill 91 is left to regulation. It's a bit of an ongoing theme for me, but the reality is that regulations can be changed very quickly and with very little input. There's no public participation that is needed for regulatory change or implementation, which is actually the case with Bill 91. What we have are very generic pieces

of legislation that we as legislators are expected to debate, and yet all of the details are in the regulations which we do not have privy to or access to. With the greatest of respect, I actually question whether the Ministry of the Environment has drafted the regulations yet.

We're only dealing with half the picture, and it concerns me greatly that we are expected to vote, debate, discuss and offer amendments on Bill 91 when the entire picture is not there. I would like the minister to actually bring forward some of the ideas that he has for the actual specifics in the regulations. That would allow this debate to be more fulsome. It would allow this debate to have a lot more value to the stakeholders, the municipalities and ultimately the consumers who are going to be impacted by Bill 91.

I'm really pleased that my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings raised the concerns with the regulations. I would hope that the minister would take that very proactive, positive suggestion and bring forward some of his ideas so that we can actually look at the details in Bill 91.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings for his comments. However, I want to respond to the one about the NDP burying their head in the sand. In fact, it is the exact opposite. We have worked very hard over the last two years while the PCs have sat here and done nothing except enter into a programming motion for Bill 74 that blew up in their faces and has backfired. We've got the Premier backing away from support for Bill 74. You have bills in there that would have passed in any event without having to form a coalition with the Liberals, which you accuse us of every day. In fact, we've achieved results for Ontarians over the last two years: in the areas of daycare funding; rural and small hospital funding; increases for home care; youth employment strategies; transitional funding for horse racing, which kept it going to now; and auto insurance rate reductions. All of those things were done because we were working hard for the people who live in this province trying to get some results over these two years. To say that we buried our head in the sand—I would say it's the PCs who have actually been burying their head in the sand, doing nothing and getting no results for anybody in this province—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Not even yourselves.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —not even yourselves; that's right.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's not about us; it's about the taxpayers.

Ms. Cindy Forster: It is about the taxpayers, and that's why we've worked hard in these two years to actually get results for the people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to the members from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, Welland, my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon and the Minister of Rural Affairs for their comments on my comments this morning on Bill 91.

The facts speak for themselves. If we continue to overregulate and if we continue to create unaccountable bureaucracies in this province, we're not going to have a province left. We're headed down the road to financial ruin in this province, and we're driving small businesses and manufacturers out of Ontario.

What has happened over the last 10 years under this Liberal government is, we've seen the deficit increase to multi-billion-dollar deficits year after year, and we've seen our debt double under Dalton McGuinty, Kathleen Wynne and the Liberal government here. What we've continued to see in this Legislature is the third party supporting this government, which we know is morally bankrupt. They have added to our deficit and they have added to our debt because, every year, when it comes to the time to make a decision as to whether or not we're going to have a new team in charge, this third party continues to support a government that we know is corrupt and continues to drive our debt and our deficit through the roof, and waste billions and billions of dollars on scandals like eHealth and the \$1.1-billion boondoggle. I don't know how much more evidence they need in the third party than the bombshell that was dropped two weeks ago that \$1.1 billion was wasted on the Oakville power plant scandal. But no, "Everything is hunky-dory. You know what? We're going to trust them to bring in another unaccountable bureaucracy, and we're going to trust them because you know what? We don't have what it takes to pull the plug."

We have a team, we have a plan for this province and we need to make it happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's my pleasure to introduce in the gallery today Mr. Tim Williams. Mr. Williams works for the Ministry of Natural Resources, and his daughter Sophia Williams started here as a page at Queen's Park. She's a grade 8 student at Adam Scott in Peterborough. We certainly welcome Mr. Williams today to view question period.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to introduce Wayne Hutchinson—Wayne, give us a wave up there—from the riding of Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, more specifically Fenelon Falls. Wayne, thanks for joining us this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Windsor—Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday, you met page Evan Tanovich. I want to point out today that in the members' gallery we have his mother, Melanie, his Aunt Jennifer and his very proud grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. Tanovich. Thank you for coming.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, in so many ways I cannot say. I'm very excited, as you know: Louis Frank, from my constituency of Toronto Centre, is one of our pages, and in the gallery is his mother, Naomi Frank. I'd like to welcome her. We share great pride in her son's accomplishment.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce to you my intern from OLIP, who will be with me until February. His name is Taylor Lew, and he's sitting in the west gallery with us this morning.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): At this time, I would like all members to join me in welcoming our group of pages. If they would assemble, we will introduce them.

From Nickel Belt, Jack Derrenbacker; from Essex, Benjamin Diab; from Pickering—Scarborough East, Arianna Dossa; from London North Centre, Jake Drewitt; from Brampton—Springdale, Gurleen Dulai; from Toronto Centre, Louis Frank; from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, Phoebe Gao; from St. Catharines, Ian Hauber; from Mississauga South, Victoria Meola; from Etobicoke North, Anal Patel; from Haldimand—Norfolk, Owen Ricker; from Oakville, Nicholas Edward Scarcelli; from Markham—Unionville, Sarhan Shafaque; from Kitchener Centre, Kate Stratthdee; from Windsor—Tecumseh, Evan Tanovich; from Thornhill, Helen Wang; from Peterborough, Sophia Williams; from Toronto—Danforth, Tristan Winfield-Hicks; from Richmond Hill, Aiden Wong; and from Windsor West, Christina Zhang.

These are our pages.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in the nine months that you've been Premier of the province of Ontario, we have yet to see any kind of jobs plan to help out the almost one million people who have no job to go to this morning. But in the absence of a jobs plan, you have brought forward 36 different panels for consultation. You have not made the tough decisions to clear the way for job creation. You have not made the difficult but necessary decisions to get spending under control, but you've made a lot of decisions basically to postpone making decisions with 36 different panels. There is clearly a void of leadership in the province of Ontario. Premier, why is it the only way you can get a good job in the province of Ontario is to be on another Liberal panel?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In response to the first question from the Leader of the Opposition, I will just mention, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me, Premier.

I'm going to start right away, but I'm going to say both sides, because—the Minister of Rural Affairs, the Premier is answering, and I can't hear her because of you. I would also mention to each of you that just because she stands up, it doesn't mean you start yelling.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would have thought that the Leader of the Opposition would have been supportive, for example, of a \$70.9-million investment in Ford that will allow Ford to develop a global platform that will allow them to be competitive around the world right from Oakville. I would have thought that he would have been very supportive of investing \$17.6 million to support business in regions across the province, leveraging \$133 million in investments and creating 2,800 jobs. I would have thought that he would have been supportive of that. I also would have thought he would have been supportive of supporting manufacturing in their attempt to buy new technology and be able to write those costs off.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Halton, come to order, please.

Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thanks, Speaker. I think the Premier missed the essential point of my question. There's certainly time for consultations and there's certainly time for conversations, but eventually the rubber has to hit the road. You have to make the tough calls. Here's the difference between your leadership style and mine: When you come to a tough decision, you appoint a panel; I make a decision, and I get things done for jobs in the province of Ontario.

Premier, you did increase the size of your cabinet by 23%. You have a very large cabinet compared to historic standards. I think there are 27 different ministers. I've got to ask you: If you've appointed 36 different panels, what the heck do your 27 cabinet ministers do all day?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Decaf. Decaf.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Further evidence of our plan: We've already placed more than 1,500 young people in jobs as a result of the youth employment fund. New jobs since February: Over 60,000 new jobs since February have been created. We've introduced the small businesses act, but the PCs are actually stalling that piece of legislation—legislation that would help small business to be able to expand, to be able to hire more people. It would help them with their payroll taxes, but the Progressive Conservatives have apparently not seen fit to support that piece of legislation and to move it forward.

We do have a plan, Mr. Speaker. We've got a plan that invests in people, that invests in infrastructure and creates

a business environment that brings investment to the province and creates jobs, but we are not going to adopt their plan. We are not going to cut and slash across the board. That's not the way to the future for Ontario.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Every decision I make is viewed through the lens of what it will do to create jobs, what it will do to grow our economy. I'm proud that we've put a plan on the table that will actually get Ontario first in jobs and last in debt, because right now it's the other way around. I think of the students who are recent university or college graduates who thought they'd be making the world by now in the province of Ontario who are back home with mom and dad and who are deep in debt.

All we have seen from the Liberal government are more studies, more panels. It's up to 36.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Training, College and Universities, come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Surely, 36 panels in nine months has to be some kind of record. I guess all these panels will be reporting in time for your economic statement. We know the economic statement is coming, and finally that economic statement will be a game-changer. We'll finally see the Wynne Liberal plans.

So, Premier, are all 36 panels reporting before the first week of November, or are you going to kick this can even farther down the road?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm happy in the final supplementary in this question to respond to the issue of consultation because if the party opposite, when they were in government—of which this member was part of the cabinet—had consulted, if they had talked to anyone about the sale of the 407, if they had talked to anyone about cutting social assistance rates, if they had talked to anyone about amalgamating cities and amalgamating school boards—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Order. Be seated, please.

The member from Halton, come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In case the member from Halton missed it, I spoke to you directly.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Would you like me to respond?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You were to come to order and not argue with me.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm sorry, Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And that could end your day here.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the party opposite had turned their chairs outwards and talked to the people who understood how cities work, how social assistance works, how the sale of assets works, we in this province would be in a very different position. But the decisions that

were made by that government undermined the social fabric of this province, and I will not apologize for talking to people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Order, please.

New question.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess we now understand what the cabinet ministers do because the panels are doing all the work: They've learned to clap once in a while. I wish they would do a job and help create some actual jobs for people in the province of Ontario.

Premier, you've described your philosophy: You think your job is to turn the chairs outward. I think that was the phrase you used. I think our job is to create jobs and to grow our economy and get Ontario moving again.

You seem to define jobs by how many panels you can construct. Look, it's getting to the point of ludicrousness, Premier. I mean, you appointed a panel to study taxes for transit, and then you appointed a panel to study your panel. You can't make this stuff up.

So let me ask you again. Enough of the panels; 36 has to be enough by far. Will you actually bring forward a comprehensive plan to grow the economy and create jobs and table your economic statement?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Of course we're going to table our economic statement, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to that document.

What I do not think is rational is to look at a plan, as the PCs would, which would fire 10,000 education workers—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —would fire 2,000 health care workers and would—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As you continued talking, I asked you to come to order, member from Nepean—Carleton.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —would drive wages down with harmful right-to-work legislation, Mr. Speaker. That's not where we're going to go. What we're doing is creating jobs. We've already placed more than 1,500 young people as a result of the youth employment fund. We're working in regions across the province. More than 60,000 jobs have been created in the province because we're investing in people. We're investing in infrastructure that the opposition doesn't seem to want to support, but that infrastructure is across the province—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Just before the supplementary: The member from Northumberland—Quinte West, come to order, and the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, come to order.

Carry on.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, respectfully, leaders make decisions. They make the hard choices. They don't keep kicking the can down the road. Quite frankly, you can't lead the province of Ontario from behind a panel. It's time to make the calls. I think it's fair for us to expect that after nine and a half months of delay we're going to see that. I imagine the economic statement is going to be a watershed moment for the province.

Here's a concern I had. There was a panel created by your predecessor—the Drummond commission. I think Don Drummond and his advisers did some very good work for the province of Ontario. And with everything we know, I think the vast majority of the recommendations could have actually moved us towards balance. You've rejected 80% of the Drummond commission's recommendations. You've tossed all the tough calls down the road. So let me ask you: Why do you create all these panels, and panels to study panels, when you're not going to listen to the recommendations at the end of the day? Is this a recipe for further drift in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition is simply wrong. We have implemented more than 60% of the recommendations that Don Drummond put in place. Don Drummond recommended that we look at the delivery of physiotherapy services. Don Drummond said we should look at the way horse racing was run in this province. We have made serious decisions and we have implemented, as I say, more than 60%.

If the Leader of the Opposition chooses to read the fall economic statement, unlike his choice not to read the budget, he will see that we are going to continue to refer to Don Drummond and the recommendations that he made. But that is not the only way forward. We must make investments in people and in infrastructure, and we have to talk with business to make sure we create an environment that is going to allow them to thrive. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, respectfully, you talk about moving forward. You can't move forward when you're paralyzed. You can't move forward when you're studying everything to death. You have paralysis by panel over there—36, for goodness' sake. I want to know why you ran to be Premier and leader of the Liberal Party in the first place if you didn't know the direction you wanted to go.

Your point is clear: to create an Ontario that leads Canada and North America in job creation again. We put our plan on the table to get energy costs under control and taxes down, to tear down the regulatory burden in the province of Ontario, to modernize our labour laws and to balance the budget. We've laid out a plan. You don't need another panel. The plan is done, and if you're not prepared to lead, then move out of the way, because we are. We'll make sure that Ontario moves forward and rises again.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've answered this question in a number of ways, and what I have said is that I am not prepared to cut and slash as the Leader of the Opposition would propose. But, again, I want to look at the assumption underlying this question, and that assumption is that it is not worthwhile for government to speak to people who have expertise in sectors across all endeavours, and I believe that that is a very, very dangerous idea to put into the political discourse. If, as government, we decide that we have all the knowledge within these ranks, that we can just turn our chairs inward and talk to each other, then we will make mistakes. We will make the kinds of mistakes that that government made—we will amalgamate cities against their will, we will sell off assets and we will cut social assistance. We're not going there.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Can the Premier tell us how much public money the government has already spent on now-abandoned plans to build new nuclear plants?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: At the present time, nuclear is producing just over 50% of the energy that we have. The existing long-term energy plan projected down to about 47% use. Our projection by cancelling new nuclear construction is that we will still be generating somewhere between 45% and 47%.

New nuclear is not required. New nuclear is costing us \$15 billion. If the leader of the third party wants to increase rates, wants to put that cost on the rate base, then that is going to push it up out of sight.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government has conceded that \$180 million so far was spent on their nuclear expansion plan before it was abandoned earlier this month. Does the Premier actually stand by that \$180-million figure?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: In preparation for new nuclear, when it was in the existing long-term energy plan, very significant environmental assessments were done. As a matter of fact, an environmental assessment was approved for new nuclear. That new nuclear approval survives for 10 years going into the future. In subsequent long-term energy plans, if new nuclear is going to be required, they already have a licence in place, Mr. Speaker. It is an option on the future, when we look at every-three-year renewable long-term energy plans.

It's the right thing to do. It's us not spending \$15 billion when we have surplus electricity to create more electricity. Nuclear will remain.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm going to try again, Speaker. It won't surprise the Premier and the Liberal Party over there to hear that people of Ontario, the people stuck paying the bills, have a hard time believing this government when it comes to the cost of electricity decisions.

Is the Premier ready to put those numbers to the test, the \$180 million that they will admit to that has been spent, and now those plans have been cancelled? Is that government prepared to put those numbers to an independent review?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have been very transparent with respect to the costs. It is there for everybody to see.

Mr. Speaker, it is the right thing not to build new nuclear at this time. It's going to cost \$15 billion, and we don't need to create that new generation when we have a surplus. Moving forward, we're going to be doing refurbishment. Refurbishment will create 15,000 jobs—15,000 jobs. Moving forward to push rates down, we're not building \$15 billion in generation. To move rates down, we have removed \$3.7 billion from the Samsung contract. We're doing the right thing for the ratepayer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I'm going to remind all members that I continue to insist that you use their titles properly and their ridings properly. I'll start to interject even stronger if it continues. I want it stopped. It becomes a spiral down.

New question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Last week, New Democrats wrote to the Auditor General asking that she look at how much money was spent on the Premier's nuclear plans. The auditor indicated that that wasn't a call she could make on her own, but she made it clear that the Premier could. Yesterday, the Premier said she wanted the government to be more open and transparent. In fact, I think I just heard the Minister of Energy say those very same words, Speaker.

Will she call in the Auditor General so that we can get a real sense of how much the government wasted on the latest electricity misadventure in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Minister of Energy has been quite clear that the costs that have been incurred are costs to get information that will be useful going forward, Mr. Speaker. That is not money that has disappeared; that is money that has been spent on getting environmental assessments and information that we will use going forward in terms of developing a long-term energy plan.

I think what's surprising is that the leader of the third party doesn't believe that it's a good thing to make a decision on new nuclear when we are clear that it is not needed at this time, that it would cost \$15 billion and that

that would drive rates up. I would have thought she would think it was a good idea to find ways to bring those costs out of the system, Mr. Speaker. That's the decision that we've made, and if the leader of the third party wants information on how that money was spent, the Ministry of Energy will be happy to provide it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families and businesses are stuck paying the highest electricity prices in this entire country, and when they look at their government for help, they see a Liberal Party defending a status quo that isn't working and scrambling to hide the evidence of their mistakes.

The Premier wants to be open and transparent. Will she call in the Auditor General to get some answers on this mess?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, we are doing the opposite of defending the status quo. We've made a decision that actually reverses a path that was not the right path to be on.

The leader of the third party talks about increasing energy costs. What we're saying is, yes, that's not a good thing. If we don't need to spend \$15 billion on new nuclear, then why would we do that? We're taking those costs out of the system.

I think that it is very clear that there is no plan for an energy future coming from the third party. We have a plan. We have made a decision on new nuclear, and if the leader of the third party wants more information on the information that has been gathered to date, we will get that information for her.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The information New Democrats want, and that the people of Ontario want, is how much the Liberals spent on a plan that they've now cancelled. The mess in Ontario's electricity system is hitting people hard. It's costing us jobs. It is draining household budgets.

People who look at the government for some leadership see a tired Liberal Party, scrambling to hide the facts even while they claim they are open and transparent. Will the Premier take one simple step today and call in the auditor to look at this latest electricity mess?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My understanding is that the Auditor General Act allows the Auditor General to determine what she looks into. If the Auditor General wants to look at this particular issue, it is entirely up to her to do that.

The fact is that, in energy, there has to be planning. The Minister of Energy has made it clear that, right now, there is no need for us to invest in the immediate- to mid- to longer-term future in new nuclear. That's \$15 billion that does not need to be spent, that the leader of the third party thinks should be spent, even though that would cause rates to go up.

What we believe in is finding a way to take costs out. If that new nuclear does not need to be built, then we should not build it. I understand that there are members within that leader's party who agree with this position.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is to the Premier. Premier, your setting of a new panel now on openness and transparency is no more than an admission of the fact that openness and transparency under your government does not exist, and the fact that you need to do something about it is apparent. But what you're doing is really just stalling the matter. You're trying to confuse the voter, and I think it's high time you gave the voter an opportunity to have a say in this. The only thing standing between you and the exit door are your friends here to the left and the fact that you won't stand up and give the voters of Ontario an opportunity to have a say. When are you going to give the voters of Ontario an opportunity to have a say?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'll answer the question that I think was embedded in that little diatribe. I would think that the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore would remember the days when it was actually impossible to get a meeting with a Conservative cabinet minister to talk about amalgamation of the city of Toronto, for example, or to talk about the amalgamation of school boards that really caused havoc across the province. I would think that the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who was a pretty prominent person in Etobicoke at the time, would remember the damage—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order, and the member from Nepean-Carleton will come to order, please.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: He would remember the damage that was done by a government that refused to consult, that refused to talk—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to do this. The Minister of Rural Affairs will come to order. Last chance.

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —to people who knew about the issues on the ground.

So I'm not going to apologize for being a government that understands that talking to people outside the walls of this building is a very important aspect of making good decisions. We will continue to talk to people who know the issues on the ground.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you're anxious, and I want to go to you, but there are people talking while I'm trying to get attention.

Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My supplementary is to the Premier again. Premier, this has gone on long enough. There have been 36 panels that you've set up in nine months to review matters. Obviously, you cannot make a decision; your group can't make a decision. It's time the people of Ontario were given the chance to make a decision. When are you going to do it?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, it's a little rich, coming from that side of the House that wants to talk about transparency, especially from that particular member, who, last time I checked, opposed the same gas plant that he likes to go on about and is right now involved in a dispute with his former role at city hall.

We have a party opposite which likes to go on and on and on about what has been going on with the gas plant issue but still refuses to have its candidates come before the committee and talk about the costing that went into its decisions, the decisions that they made very clearly and very aggressively that the only way the gas plants would ever be cancelled would be if the Leader of the Opposition became Premier. They went all over the place in the campaign, talking about that, and yet they refuse to go in front of the committee and talk—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question. The member from—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm in the middle of a sentence. Would you mind?

The member from Toronto—Danforth.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Today Liberal members in the justice committee spent the morning trying to discredit the auditor's report. I'll be clear: We take the independent auditor at her word. Is the Premier directing committee members to discredit the auditor?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to speak to the supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

I want to just be very clear that we accepted the findings of the Auditor General. I appreciate her work. The questions that are being asked at committee are not being directed by my office; they're not being directed by me. As I said before, we accepted the findings of the Auditor General, and I look forward to working with her on other issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, given that today the Liberals called one of the civil servants involved in the gas plant negotiations, to try and discredit the auditor, and that Liberals tried to get him to defend costing, which undermines the auditor, you have to ask—even the pre-

vious Premier didn't attack the auditor in this way—why is the Premier launching an unprecedented attack on our independent auditor?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It is this Premier who asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville situation and report back to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, the committee is seized with the issue, and I think it behooves members on all sides of the House to explore her report, to call forward witnesses and to further examine her analysis that was put forward.

Speaking of examining analysis, we still await the NDP analysis. Why did that very same member who asked that question go around opposing the Oakville plant, opposing the Mississauga plant, and yet refuses to discuss the costing that the New Democratic Party undertook when it made that commitment? The New Democratic Party was as vocal as the PC Party, saying that if they were elected, they would cancel the plant. I think it's time they came clear with the costing and the analysis that they undertook.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, during the constituency week, which was this past week, my office received emails and phone calls from my constituents about the increasing cost of auto insurance. This issue is not a new issue; it has been there for quite some time.

Minister, as you know, in 2011 and then again in March 2012, I brought my private member's bill that, by cracking down on fraud, we can lower the auto insurance rates. Our government brought reforms and created an anti-fraud task force. The rates came down. And last week, I noticed that rates have come down, but that is a modest reduction. My constituents want to see further rate reduction.

Minister, can you tell my constituents what our government is doing to reform the auto insurance industry and lower the rates?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member from Mississauga—Brampton South, Amrit Mangat, is absolutely right. Auto insurance rates in Ontario are too high, and thanks to her leadership, she's championed this by providing a private member's bill over two years ago on this very issue. I appreciate her tireless commitment to this important issue and her involvement in our government's ongoing efforts to bring down auto insurance rates in Ontario.

Last week, auto insurance rates were released. For the third consecutive quarter, rates came down. It's just the beginning. The stabilization of rates is a direct result of our reforms that were implemented in 2010, and we're on track to see even further reductions.

These initiatives have helped ensure that we're fighting not only fraud to get rid of excess costs in the system, but that we're seeing results of those actions to reduce those rates.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I agree that rate stabilization is important. Premium costs must be controlled. While the reforms that our government has undertaken have stabilized the rates, still the rates are significantly higher than other jurisdictions. And we all know that cars are no longer a luxury; it's a necessity. We need to drive to go to work, to do our groceries and pick up our kids. Families are struggling to keep up with the rising costs.

My constituents want to see further reduction and for our government to take concrete action. Can you please further speak to our government's ongoing efforts to lower the rates that we announced in budget 2013?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Again, thank you to the member. We're determined to reduce the costs of auto insurance rates in Ontario drivers by an average of 15%. This summer, we provided the regulator the authority to require those insurers to file for lower rates. Insurers have already started to file for lower rates with FSCO.

Mr. Speaker, we're also continuing to tackle fraud. We're taking steps to license medical clinics, to fight fraudulent claims and lower costs.

This coming January, we will see the results—the first results—of our actions. With the measures of our government, and my colleagues, we have put in place what we expect to be a rate reduction of several percentage points, and it will be our first step on our path to bring down rates by 15%.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. You like to talk a good game on consultations and listening to people, and you've set up these 36 panels. But let's look at the history of these gas plant scandals, Speaker. I think she needs to listen to what the public wants responses to.

She was the chair of the campaign that made the decision to cancel them. She signed the negotiation contract from the cabinet table. That government withheld documents from my colleagues in both sides of this House who were trying to get information. They obstructed the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Now they've created a panel who I'm not sure if it is trying to open government, or trying to figure out ways they can close it even more.

Earlier today, Serge Imbrogno, the deputy minister at the Ministry of the Environment, told us that the government knew all along that it would be \$750 million or more to cancel that Oakville plant.

So you say you like to talk and listen to people. If that's true, why won't you go out to the people and finally get a mandate from them?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member wants to talk about history. Let's share some of the favourites here: "The people of Oakville have told you they don't want the proposed gas-fired power plant ... and I agree

with them"—the member from Halton, Hansard, June 1, 2010.

"Oakville residents have called on you to change the location of the proposed Oakville power plant.... I have listened to the people of Oakville, and I agree with them"—the member from Halton, Hansard, September 14, 2010.

"Minister, will you move the Oakville power plant? ... I am asking the minister to consider moving this plant"—the member from Halton, press release, September 14, 2010.

"I was pleased when it was cancelled"—the member from Halton, Hansard, October 19, 2010.

"It was sad that it took so long for the government to listen to the people of Oakville ... it was nice to see that decision overturned"—the member from Halton, Toronto Sun—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1110

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Speaker, I'd like to buy an N, as in, "No one cares about your rhetoric."

I'm asking a serious question of the Premier of Ontario about how she has been riddled with closing down a government to the people that she represents and that she hasn't sought a mandate for. We're simply asking her to get that mandate from the people, because they are tired of your \$1-billion boondoggles on the gas plants, on OLG and at eHealth.

Ladies and gentlemen of this assembly, this is a Premier who has made a career out of hiding information from this assembly. I am simply asking: Will she stand in her place, will she call an election and will she make sure that the mandate from the people is spoken in this assembly?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I have a quote from the mayor of Oakville, Mayor Rob Burton, from a month or two ago, and this is an exact quote: "On October 5, 2011, on the day before the provincial election, in front of the still under construction Mississauga power plant, PC leader Tim Hudak promises to stop the power plant if he wins the election, after only days before warning that he's sure it 'may cost another \$1 billion.' Later, in 2013, he insists it was irresponsible for then-Premier McGuinty to have cancelled it 'without knowing what it would cost,' even though it cost far less than Hudak says he" thought it would cost, when he himself promised in 2011 to cancel it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Manitoulin and—yes.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Premier. Last year, the Premier went out to Sudbury to announce

that the government had reached a deal with Cliffs, and that it would create hundreds of mining jobs from the Ring of Fire. Only a year later, it has finally become clear that not only did this government not have a real deal with Cliffs, but the company is about to pull out of Ontario because of the mess this government has made of the Ring of Fire development plans.

Why is the government misleading the people of Ontario with this promise of fictitious—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'll withdraw.

When will this government, in fact, develop a plan for the Ring of Fire and implement it?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Orazietti: I'm pleased to respond to the member's question. Certainly, I would think that the member is not suggesting that the government intervene in what has become a legal dispute with respect to one of the companies. I know the member is not implying that. What we are doing, though, is, we are prepared to work with any company who is coming forward to help develop the Ring of Fire and to create jobs in this area.

I have full confidence in Justice Iacobucci, who is seized with the negotiations on this, as well as Bob Rae, who is representing the First Nations in the area. I know that the Premier and the Minister of Northern Development and Mines have met with the Matawa Tribal Council and the First Nations, because they are an integral part of ensuring that this development proceeds and moves forward.

We understand that this is a sizable, very significant development in the province of Ontario, and it will take some time to get this right. Our government is committed to moving this project forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary: The member from Algoma-Manitoulin, with my apology.

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question, again, is to the Premier. The Ring of Fire is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for the people of Ontario, but it requires transportation, electricity prices, environmental guidelines and consultation—leadership by this government. The Liberal government's lack of action sends a bad message to companies who are willing to invest in Ontario.

The question is simple: When will we see a real plan for the Ring of Fire development that benefits northern communities, First Nations and Ontario?

Hon. David Orazietti: The member is oversimplifying what is a hugely complex issue in the development of northern Ontario and the Ring of Fire that has the potential to benefit us for decades and decades to come, and benefit First Nations communities. We need to get this right. I have every confidence in Justice Iacobucci and Bob Rae, who are leading the negotiations with the First Nations and are very involved in all of the specific details of this proposal. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines is committed to working with all parties, the communities. We think there's tremendous

potential for the community of Greenstone to play a very significant role in this development to bring new jobs and new opportunities to Ontario.

While the member might dismiss what he believes is very simple, this is a complex issue that our government is committed to moving forward, and we believe we've got the right people at the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

I would ask that some of the conversations that are going on in between while the answers are being put or the question is being put to stop, please.

New question.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Unfortunately, too many of us know loved ones who are currently fighting cancer or who are no longer with us because of it. When we hear of loved ones who are diagnosed with cancer, all we can do is wish them the best and hope that they receive the best treatment possible.

Earlier this year, we heard disturbing news of chemotherapy underdosing. It was good to know that the minister took immediate action on this. The appointment of Dr. Jake Thiessen to investigate and report on the causes of the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs was a positive step forward.

Dr. Thiessen's report was released late this summer. Speaker, through you, could the minister tell this House what action has been taken in response to his recommendations?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Ottawa-Orléans for this very important question. Speaker, no Ontarian should have to go through what the family members and patients who experienced this underdosing went through. Nobody should have to go through that.

We need to make sure it does not happen again, and that's why we appointed Dr. Jake Thiessen to give us advice on how to make sure that something like this does not happen again. Yes, Speaker, this was independent advice that we got from a panel. I want to thank Dr. Thiessen for his hard work. His recommendations are sound; I endorse them all.

Our ministry established a task force to oversee the implementation of 11 of the 12 recommendations he made, and I was pleased to introduce legislation that directly responds to the 12th. I'm bringing it forward for second reading later today. This legislation, if passed, would empower the Ontario College of Pharmacists to oversee and inspect hospital pharmacies.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Minister. I'm pleased to hear we are taking action on Dr. Thiessen's recommendations. In his report, he commended the health care system for its fast and appropriate response to this situation.

However, this incident exposed concerns beyond what's in the proposed legislation, particularly around an apparent grey area in oversight of some drug compounders. Ontarians should always know that they are receiving the best-quality health care; they should never have to second-guess the medical services that they receive. It is important that as a government we continue to address the concerns of Ontarians, including the oversight of some drug compounders.

Could the minister tell this House what steps she has taken to address these concerns and continue to ensure that as a government we are protecting patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we learned more about this situation, it became apparent that the company which mixed these drugs was overseen neither by the College of Pharmacists nor Health Canada. So working closely with the college, our government stepped up and moved quickly to approve a regulation extending the college's oversight to large-scale drug compounders. I'm pleased to report that these drug preparation facilities have now been inspected: All of them have passed, and the inspection reports are posted online.

In the long run, Dr. Thiessen has recommended that this situation demands a national solution. I understand that Health Canada is currently considering a nationwide inspection regime for drug compounders. My ministry has co-operated very closely with Health Canada. I look forward to working together with Health Canada as we find ways to further protect patients.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Premier. You continue to promise that a government under your watch will be more open and transparent, yet on the mining file that's not the case. Since you have been Premier, more information has become available through the media than from the government or the ministry on what is being done to get the Ring of Fire moving. We have a negotiator that you appointed, we have the Ring of Fire Secretariat you created, several ministries with overlapping responsibilities, and no real progress on the ground.

Premier, now that we have cleared the deck and jobs are waiting to be unlocked in the Ring of Fire, what are you going to do to make it become a reality?

1120

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to reinforce what the Minister of Natural Resources said, which is that we have a lot of faith in the folks who are involved in building those relationships and in the negotiation with the First Nations. But I want to be clear that it is a very complex thing. I don't know if the member opposite is aware of how many First Nations communities are involved, whether he's aware of the need to make sure that the social supports and training supports are in place so that First Nations young people and residents of communities can take part in this economic growth, and whether he understands that there are a number of companies who have vested interests.

There are a number of moving parts. I can tell you, drawing on my time as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, that if we do not get this right in the first instance, if we do not build these relationships and make sure the training and supports are in place, then we will not be able to develop the Ring of Fire. It's as simple as that. So we're going to get it right. We're going to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Again, to the Premier: Just yesterday, Premier, more bad news. One of the major players in the Ring of Fire, Cliffs Natural Resources, described the project as being in a "tenuous state." They went on to say, "If the company doesn't have a transportation route, it doesn't have a project."

Premier, these are jobs waiting to be unlocked that are being put in jeopardy by your bungling of this file. What are you doing to ensure access to the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are a number of disputes and issues that have arisen because of, as I said, the complexity of building the infrastructure. Again, if you've ever flown over this part of Ontario and spent time—I had the opportunity this summer to be paddling north on the Attawapiskat River to a place where the land of the Ring of Fire begins—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It is an intricate environmental landscape. It's laced with water and land. There are enormous concerns about the watersheds and the environmental issues, and, as I say, the ability of the First Nations communities to take part in the economic development and to be partners. We're going to get this right. We are not going to move ahead until we have all of those issues—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When it comes to saving jobs at the Fort Erie Race Track, the Premier throws around accusations of playing politics, but it's her government who is playing fast and loose with the livelihoods of 600 people at the Fort Erie Race Track, not to mention \$7.9 million worth of spin-off jobs that depend on horse racing in Niagara.

The Premier insists she wants to help rural Ontario. When will she stop hiding behind her panel, take ownership of her government's decisions and reconsider the economic consequences of cutting out the Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that the work that has been done on the horse racing file by John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson is a perfect example of government needing to turn to people who have expertise, have relationships within the industry and are able to give us advice that quite frankly has put us back on a sustainable trajectory for the horse racing industry.

I am very pleased that we have made a decision to put \$400 million into the horse racing industry over the next few years to allow the horse racing industry—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne:—which I think is a critical part of the culture and history of rural Ontario, but it goes way beyond that. There are tens of thousands of jobs, and we want to make sure that the horse racing industry is sustainable.

The Fort Erie Race Track has the opportunity to work with the ORC. I have said clearly that horse racing needs to be integrated into the work of the OLG, and I look forward to them having a bright future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, the Premier whistled in the Falls and in Niagara-on-the-Lake last weekend, but if she would have found her way down to Fort Erie she could have heard it straight from the horse's mouth. Owners in Fort Erie are scared of losing their jobs, their savings, their cars, their homes, their kids' tuition, their farms, their everything.

Last Tuesday at the track, one couple squeezed my hand and looked into my eye and told me that if there's no racing in Fort Erie next season, they're going to lose their life's work.

The Liberal plan to ram private mega casinos into cities over Ontario isn't working, and it's causing real damage in communities like Fort Erie. Is the Premier ready to admit that she was wrong, allow the Slots at Racetracks Program to continue, and work with the Fort Erie Race Track so it can keep people working and help the Niagara economy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have said repeatedly that there is the opportunity for Fort Erie to work with the ORC to make sure that there is a future for Fort Erie, and it is up to that conversation to come up with a plan to go forward.

Our responsibility was to look at the whole horse racing industry. My predecessor put in place a group of people who knew the industry and gave us advice, and we have now got a plan that will take us forward. There is no plan coming from the NDP in terms of how to have a transparent, sustainable horse racing industry. We have that plan in place. It is going to be possible for racetracks across the province to have a future, as well as the breeders, and that means that there will continue to be jobs and there will continue to be a horse racing industry in Ontario.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Libraries are a cornerstone of every community. Strong library systems translate into strong communities, as they contribute to the education, literacy and lifelong learning for Ontarians of all ages. Our public libraries help children learn, provide resources

for students and assist small businesses and entrepreneurs.

Minister, as part of Canadian Library Month, just yesterday you and I launched the Ontario Public Library Week at the beautiful Cedarbrae library in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. This is an excellent chance for everyone to celebrate the many resources and experiences that our local public libraries provide to our communities.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he please explain what our government is doing to promote and support our libraries across the province?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, Speaker, for the question. I want to thank the member for helping me yesterday to kick off the Ontario Public Library Week.

Across the province, people gather together at their local libraries to take part in the fun activities planned for library week. The theme for this year is Libraries Connect. This is the perfect way to describe the role that libraries play in communities all year round. Libraries are about connecting people to information, services, the world of literature and, most of all, connecting people to each other by providing a space for them to come together, interact and share their love of learning. Ontario's public libraries hold over 160,000 programs annually.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you for that response, Minister. In my diverse community of Scarborough–Guildwood, there is no doubt that the Cedarbrae library is providing services that are valuable to our community. In fact, they have—in 11 languages spoken—library areas that are providing that service.

These libraries are the hub of our community and our province, and it's great to see that our government is proud to support them. As we continue into the digital age, where so much information is readily available on the Internet, it's easy to forget that libraries are still a great source to learn and to provide programming from the wonderful people who run them. Yesterday, we could definitely tell that they serve a very important role, not only for children but for their parents and for all Ontarians.

Minister, you are supportive of Ontario libraries, and I saw that yesterday. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is the Ontario government doing to ensure that the funding to our libraries is sustainable?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again, Speaker, for the question. As part of the 2013 Ontario budget, our government is strengthening its support of the library sector by increasing the base operational funding of its two key library agencies. We are funding \$400,000 to the Southern Ontario Library Service, for a total of \$3.1 million, and \$60,000 to Ontario Library Service–North, for a total of \$1.56 million. This increase will help ensure the stable delivery of programs and services in the library sector. My ministry has also committed to funding an additional \$1.8 million per year for e-resources in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Since 2003, we have committed over \$435 million in support of public libraries.

1130

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Premier. Premier, you've messed up the entire energy file. You cancelled the gas-powered generating stations in Oakville and Mississauga; you cost Ontario taxpayers and electricity consumers over \$1 billion. First, you tried to cover up the costs of the cancellation; then you said you were sorry.

Premier, last week you suddenly cancelled the two nuclear reactors planned for the Darlington generating station. This has cost Ontario Power Generation and the taxpayers of Ontario over \$180 million. Your decision to curtail this project cost jobs and investment opportunities for Clarington, Durham region and indeed for Ontario. Premier, you apologized for the gas plant fiasco. Will you now apologize for the cancellation of the Darlington new build project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, nuclear energy is going to continue to be the baseload for Ontario. It is now over 50%; the present long-term energy plan that was adopted in 2010 moves it down to 47%. It's going to stay in that range.

In the meantime, speaking of refurbishment, refurbishing Ontario's nuclear capacity will create almost 25,000 jobs and generate \$5 billion of annual economic revenue for that member's community. We're going to work with that community; we're going to ensure that it's not short any jobs. The refurbishment will make up a tremendous amount of that. The refurbishment of Candu reactors will allow Darlington to continue operating until 2055—job security until 2055. It's right to cancel new nuclear; we don't need the power. We ought not to be spending—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. John O'Toole: It would be more appropriate if you could simply trust this government over here, a new minister particularly.

The former energy minister, Chris Bentley, visited Durham in June 2012. He described the agreement with Westinghouse and Candu Energy as a good first step for Darlington. He was quoted in the local media saying that these early agreements with OPG were very important steps. He said Darlington would “provide clean, reliable cost-efficient power for decades into the future.”

With almost 600,000 Ontarians out of work and the provincial debt at over \$260 billion, clearly your government has given up on the manufacturing sector in Ontario. What a shame. On this side of the House, we have not given up. I have confidence in Ontario's energy sector and its highly trained workforce. Premier, will you go on the record today, clearly committing to at least the refurbishment of the four units at the Darlington generating station?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: “Renewing the reactors at the Darlington and Bruce nuclear generating stations will mean thousands of jobs for Ontario.... It also means nu-

clear energy will provide another 25 to 30 years of safe, reliable and affordable power and offset huge amounts of greenhouse gas emissions.” That's from the Canadian Nuclear Association president, Heather Kleb.

Nuclear is going to remain the baseload for Ontario. It's going to be in the mid-40s, the 47%. We are going to save the taxpayers of Ontario an expenditure of \$15 billion and help to keep the rates down. It's the right decision to make; it's the right time to be making that decision.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Ontario government's process to award school bus contracts is pushing out locally owned operators. Larger bus companies virtually have a monopoly by underbidding smaller, local companies. What's worse, bus drivers in the London area are being asked to take a reduction of 18% in pay and take on more work this year by these big companies.

Why is this government favouring large companies that are pushing out smaller, locally owned ones by underbidding on contracts and forcing their employees to make up the difference?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much to the member. I'm pleased to respond to her question.

I'm actually quite surprised to hear the comments around operators and the wage issue. In fact, it was our government, through the funding model, when the Premier was the Minister of Education, that actually invested additional funding in the transportation model, precisely to ensure that school bus drivers received wage increases. We also have invested in the transportation funding model to ensure that the increased cost of fuel was recognized.

So I'm quite surprised to hear the accusation that we're not allowing for the funding of wages for school bus drivers at the local level. Clearly, consortiums have made some local decisions that aren't totally consistent—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, what the bigger picture is as well, when we're talking about—wages, of course, of the bus drivers are utmost, and they're being affected because the government's policy has pushed out the smaller bus companies.

The member from Timmins—James Bay has brought this issue forward. He has alerted the minister that he's heard that over 30 small bus companies have been pushed out of business because bigger bus companies are underbidding smaller companies, and therefore workers are suffering.

Speaker, there's something very wrong when the government's policy favours the big companies that push out the small business owners. Instead of the money going to the London area economy, it's being put in the pocket of the big bus companies that are forcing their employees to work longer hours for less money so they can make larger profits—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Education?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think what we need to do is just back up a minute, here. There's clearly a question here about the procurement process.

I would like to point out that the Auditor General—at least, the past Auditor General—has been quite clear that when there is procurement in the public sector, there must be competitive procurement. When our government expanded the role of the Auditor General to be able to look at school boards and universities and colleges, the first thing the auditor did in each sector was actually go around and look at procurement. What he said about procurement in school board transportation was that it was not open procurement.

Since open procurement, competitive procurement has been put in place, we actually have seen local operators increase their market share—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

WASTE DIVERSION

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Last Thursday, I kicked off the 2013 Waste Reduction Week in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt by bringing the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario to Sir William Osler High School. Commissioner Miller talked to the students about the impact of food waste and promoted a variety of waste diversion programs, such as composting and recycling.

Yesterday marks the first official day of Waste Reduction Week, which is a nation-wide campaign which helps to raise awareness about waste and its environmental and social consequences. Since 2001, Waste Reduction Week in Canada has been organized by organizations of the NGOs, non-profit environmental groups and governments from each of Canada's 13 provinces and territories.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain the significance of Waste Reduction Week and what Ontarians can do to participate in this important event?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Waste Reduction Week, as members would know, aims to inform and engage Canadians about the environmental and social ramifications of wasteful practices. It strives to educate, engage and empower Canadians to reduce, to reuse and to recycle waste.

Further, Waste Reduction Week provides information and ideas to reduce waste in all facets of daily living, creating the solutions to the many environmental challenges we face today, including climate change, water pollution and the preservation of natural resources.

Depending on whether you're an individual or a part of a school, a business, a municipality, a government organization or a non-profit organization, Waste Reduction Week offers different resources for participants to get involved. We encourage all Ontarians to do what they

can to help strengthen this initiative, and for members of this House, what they could do is pass Bill 91 on second reading, bring it to committee—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to correct my record. I overstated—of course, my office works with committee members on questions, but the questions are aimed at getting information. That's what the opposition, that's what the government does, and I just wanted to make that clear. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member does have a point of order in correcting her record.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I too want to correct my record. In reference to when the government knew of the \$750-million-or-more figure, I had mistakenly noted that Serge Imbrogno was the Deputy Minister of the Environment; he is indeed the Deputy Minister of Energy, which I think makes the point even clearer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has a point of order. She can correct her record. I thank her for that.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have some folks who aren't here yet that I was going to introduce at a later time. *[Inaudible]* my private member's bill in. It will be four people. Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEALTH CARE ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise on behalf of a constituent whose name should be familiar to every MPP. We're just some of the many people Arnold Kilby has written to in his quest for truth behind the death of his daughter, Terra Dawn. She died seven years ago at the age of 28, following routine surgery at Humber River Regional Hospital.

Since that terrible day when his daughter died shortly after being discharged, Arnold has been on a mission—not for revenge, not for money. He wanted two simple things—two things he frankly should never have had to ask for, let alone wage a seven-year battle for that continues today. He wanted an admission that basic precautions weren't taken prior to her surgery and afterwards, when it was clear something had gone terribly wrong. He also wanted what every parent would: an assurance that Terra Dawn's death wasn't in vain, that the mistakes made would lead to changes.

It proved to be a mission impossible. If the seven years of hell Arnold spent trapped in an alphabet soup of agencies tells us anything, it's that true accountability and oversight of Ontario's medical profession exists in name only. No patient or parent should have to endure this. I commend Sun Media columnist Alan Shanoff for bringing Arnold and Terra Dawn's story to light.

That's why today I'm calling on the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and the College of Physicians and Surgeons to create a truly open and transparent medical oversight and accountability system.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Last night, Windsor city council passed a motion to send a letter to the Minister of Transportation with a list of questions concerning the safety of the girders on the Herb Gray Parkway. The mayor and city councillors want answers and assurances that this government is not putting money before safety when it comes to the defective girders on this highway. They want to know how the province plans to rehabilitate 300 defective girders already installed, why they're allowing questionable tack welding on the girders and how accidents such as fires will affect these girders.

Andrea Horwath and I have questioned the minister about this in the House several times. Now the citizens of Windsor, through their city council, are asking this government to start giving answers on the safety of the parkway, not only as it stands today, Speaker, but they want to make sure it will be safe 10, 15 and 30 years from now and beyond.

The people of Windsor as well as those in Tecumseh and LaSalle deserve answers, given the lack of oversight on the largest-ever infrastructure project in the province. The government needs to hold a public meeting and explain its decision to keep the faulty girders in place, and it can begin by answering every question put to them by members of Windsor city council.

I sincerely hope this government will finally respond to the continuing suspicions about the safety of these girders.

MELVINA WALTER

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, you will know that the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship is an award that recognizes people who have made an exceptional long-term contribution to the quality of life in the province of Ontario. To date, more than six million Ontarians have volunteered annually, and they have contributed over 820 million annual volunteer hours.

Over 20 years ago, Melvina Walter co-founded the Halton Women's Centre in my riding of Oakville. As executive director of the Halton Women's Centre, Melvina continues to educate women by offering a variety of programs and services designed to prevent violence against women.

Perhaps one of Melvina's most remarkable qualities is her ability to consistently encourage and inspire those

around her as she takes on a mentoring role. For her work, she was recognized with a Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012. In August 2008, she had already received the Leading Women, Building Communities Award. And, Speaker, on Thursday, October 17 of this year, she was recognized with the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

Melvina, keep doing what you are doing so well. Thank you for making Ontario a better place to live. Congratulations on winning the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship.

Speaker, you will know that in all our communities there are people who talk about how things should be and there are those people who step forward, put their own money on the line, put their own time on the line and try to build organizations that move off into the future, making sure that other people don't undergo some of the challenges as a society that we've experienced in the past.

Melvina Walter is one of those people who has taken this issue by the reins and has just made such a difference in the town of Oakville. I wish her well and thank her for all she has done.

PAUL COOK

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Today, I stand to pay tribute, Speaker, to one of Nipissing's finest: North Bay Police Chief Paul Cook. Earlier this month, Chief Cook was named an Officer of Merit of the Police Forces by Governor General David Johnston. He was recognized, along with 28 other officers, during a ceremony at the Citadelle in Quebec.

Chief Cook has served in policing for 31 years, all of those coming in the city of North Bay. He joined the North Bay Police Service as a constable in 1982, and, over time, rose through the ranks, serving first as deputy police chief before being named chief in 2004.

Chief Cook has always looked to better himself and those around him. He has travelled to FBI headquarters in Quantico, Virginia, for training and has served as vice-president of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police and, this year, became president of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police.

On a personal note, Speaker, I've known Paul for many, many years, and I worked with him when I served on the local police services board as mayor of the city of North Bay. I'm very proud—very, very proud—that he represents Nipissing with distinction and dedication each and every day. I offer him, and all his family, congratulations on behalf of all of the residents of Nipissing.

AUDREY TOBIAS

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to salute and pay great tribute to Audrey Tobias. People might ask, "Who is Audrey Tobias?" She's the lady who stood up to the government of Canada, refused to fill out the census form and, actually, was found not guilty.

I say, she's a remarkable woman. Before her trial began—I want to quote her: "I will not pay a fine. I will

not do community service—I already do a lot for the community. So if I have to go to jail, I'll go to jail."

We know her in our community—she's an East Yorker, and a proud one—as a feisty 89-year-old. We also know that she took the principled stand based on the fact that she did not believe that Lockheed Martin should have the contract, and she did not want her information to go to that corporation.

She's a well-known activist. In the year 2000, she was given the Agnes Macphail Award as the honouree from East York who epitomized all the things that Agnes Macphail stood for, including peace. She recognized peace and disarmament. She fought to keep our local post office open when they were closing it down. She protected our community services, and she tried to establish a Canadian peace tax fund.

She's done all of this and continues to do all of this. We are so very proud of her in the community. We're so very proud.

We just want to say: Congratulations, Audrey. If 89-year-old people like you can stand up and say what's right and do the right thing, you give great inspiration to all of us.

JEAN GOVE-CARBONE

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased today to give recognition to Jean Gove-Carbone and the work she has done to help preserve the history of Weston Village.

Working with the Weston Heritage Conservation District, Ms. Gove-Carbone has done much to document the history of Weston Village, calling on both her incredible eight decades of memories in Weston as well as helping to celebrate the memory of her father, James Gilbert Gove, the stonemason who built Weston's trademark Humberstone walls as well as the memorial cenotaph.

Her incredible stories of what it was like to attend King Street Public School as a first-grade student all the way back in 1935, and her vivid recollections of watching horses pull Humberstones from the river to help build the community, can be read on the Weston Heritage Conservation District website. I am glad she has shared her memories with the community.

1510

Thanks to the efforts of people like Jean, we remember not just important dates and names that make up the history of this community, but the real humanity behind the stories of Weston. I applaud her desire to pass these memories on to the future generations of Weston.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Today I rise to share the concerns of the people of Chatham-Kent-Essex. Yesterday, my constituency offices in Chatham, Leamington and even right here at Queen's Park had been receiving calls from constituents who were concerned, and actually angry, over the upcoming hydro rate increases effective November 1.

Just this morning, Mike Lenover, who runs a butcher's shop in Chatham, came to my office to show us just how much his bills have already increased. Comparing his 2011 and 2013 bills, Mike did all the right things as a business owner. He's conserving energy, and brought in an energy efficiency expert to streamline his operations. He's actually using less power than in 2011, yet he's paying almost 70% more on his bill. The global adjustment rate alone has increased by 277%.

Mike's father, Keith, started Lenovers Meats in Chatham back in 1938. The local business has weathered many storms and stayed profitable, but is having a tough time as energy rates skyrocket under this Liberal government. Mike's energy bill is now almost equal to his payroll. Now he's bracing for yet another increase on his hydro rates, effective November 1.

The families and small businesses of Chatham-Kent-Essex will not tolerate paying the price for Liberal mismanagement on their energy bills anymore.

SCARBOROUGH RENAISSANCE CONFERENCE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: This past weekend, I had the opportunity to take part in a long-standing tradition in Scarborough by attending the 27th annual Renaissance Conference, which took place on Saturday at the Scarborough Civic Centre.

This annual policy conference was started by the former member for Scarborough-Agincourt, the Honourable Gerry Phillips. While it started as a small gathering of Scarborough caucus members and their staff, with a few community leaders, it has grown to include many people from the Scarborough community, drawing local business owners, stakeholders and residents from throughout Scarborough, including Ashwani Bhardwaj from my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, who helped organize.

I had the opportunity to sit on one of three panels, the panel on gridlock and transit in the city. I was joined by Bruce McCuaig, the CEO of Metrolinx, and Gordon Chong, the former vice-chair of the TTC, as well as my colleague the member from Ajax-Pickering, Joe Dickson, who ably served as chair of the gridlock discussion. The discussion was lively, and members of the Scarborough community were able to voice their opinions and concerns.

Our lunch keynote was delivered by our former colleague and friend John Tory. He spoke of the potential in Scarborough, as well as the inroads the Ontario government has made under the leadership of Premier McGuinty and Premier Wynne, while addressing the actions that we need to make to help the GTA to reach its full potential, including youth jobs and transit investment.

It was a valuable experience, and I'm glad that my colleagues in Scarborough were able to share as well.

SMALL BUSINESS

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise in the House today and celebrate Small Business Week 2013 in On-

tario. This is a week that many Ontarians should celebrate, as small businesses continue to be the backbone of our economy. A whopping 98% of businesses in Ontario are considered small businesses, providing the vast majority of our employment, and it relies on the continued success of small enterprises in this country and in this province. I know that they are certainly the job producers in the riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

There are many celebrations that are going on throughout the week. In the city of Kawartha Lakes this week, they have something every day; I'm sorry I'm unable to join them, as we're here, but there's a great deal to celebrate in business in the riding.

But I want to point out that current government policies are making it harder for businesses to succeed. I hear continuously of the over-regulation—over-regulated to death. That costs them time; it costs them money. They can't hire the one or two people in their small businesses, so jobs are lost in that way. The skyrocketing energy bills that exist are putting them out of business. I tell you: A farmer can only do so much with peak pricing and off-peak pricing when he's milking cows. It's just making it more unaffordable and harder to do business.

The College of Trades, for example, is harassing barbers and hairdressers in front of their customers.

We should celebrate Small Business Week by encouraging less government interference in our small businesses.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, establishing the Select Committee on Developmental Services, the Clerk of the House has received written notification from the chief whips of the recognized parties designating the membership of the committee as follows: Ms. Albanese, Mr. Balkissoon, Ms. DiNovo, Mrs. Elliott, Ms. Hunter, Mr. Jackson, Ms. Jones, Ms. Taylor and Ms. Wong.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments, dated October 22, 2013, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe North on a point of order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Before I introduce the bill, I'd like to introduce some folks who are here joining us today as I introduce the bill. They represent literally thousands of employers across the province of Ontario: Karen Renkema, from the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada; Stephen Hamilton, from the Ontario Home Builders' Association; Dave Baxter, from the London and District Construction Association; and Frank Notte, who represents over a thousand automobile dealers with the Trillium Automobile Dealers Association. I appreciate you guys being here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We always welcome our guests. Now it's time for introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

NO NEW TAX FOR BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 N'IMPOSANT AUCUNE NOUVELLE CONTRIBUTION AUX ENTREPRISES

Mr. Dunlop moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 118, An Act to amend the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 / Projet de loi 118, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2009 sur l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario et l'apprentissage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Currently, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009, includes a section that is not in force that would prohibit a person from employing journeypersons or sponsoring or employing apprentices unless the person is a member of that college. The bill repeals that section and related provisions. The bill also eliminates the class of membership for persons who employ journeypersons who sponsor or employ apprentices.

The short title of the bill will be the No New Tax for Businesses Act.

It is Small Business Week, and I'm hoping that when this bill is passed it will exempt all employers that have employees with the College of Trades from ever paying any kind of membership tax.

FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATION AMENDMENT ACT (SPECIAL WARRANTS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ADMINISTRATION FINANCIÈRE (MANDATS SPÉCIAUX)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 119, An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act with respect to special warrants / *Projet de loi 119, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'administration financière en ce qui concerne les mandats spéciaux.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, this bill amends the Financial Administration Act to limit the circumstances in which the Lieutenant Governor in Council may order that a special warrant be issued when the Legislature is not in session. At present, a special warrant may be issued at any time when the Legislature is not in session. The bill amends the act so that a special warrant can be issued only if no more than 60 days have passed since the Legislature was last in session.

GRAND JURIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LES GRANDS JURYS

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 120, An Act to provide for grand juries in Ontario / *Projet de loi 120, Loi prévoyant la constitution de grands jurys en Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, this bill enacts the Grand Juries Act, 2013. Here are some highlights of the act. Judges of the Superior Court of Justice are required to convene grand juries in every county and district. Grand juries serve a one-year term. The seven members of each grand jury are selected from the jury roll in accordance with the Juries Act. Members may be excused from jury duty on grounds of illness and hardship. Members may also be excluded from jury duty if their service would or could present a conflict of interest.

Grand juries may review the activities of public institutions specified in subsection 3-1 of the act. A review is limited to activities within a grand jury's county or district. Grand juries may consult the public about which institutions to review. Grand juries may enter the premises of the institutions and may make inquiries of the institution's employees. Grand juries may appoint experts for assistance.

Grand juries have the right of access to records that are in the institution's custody and care, unless the records fall within an exemption from disclosure under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Certain exemptions will not apply where a compelling public interest in the disclosure clearly outweighs the purpose of the exemption.

Grand juries are required to prepare reports in respect of their reviews. Reports must be filed as public documents and be made available for public inspection. Reports must also be tabled in the Legislative Assembly.

It is an offence to obstruct a review by a grand jury or any member of a grand jury. Penalties are specified in section 8 of the act.

PROVINCIAL OFFENCES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (JURY TRIALS), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LES INFRACTIONS PROVINCIALES (PROCÈS DEVANT JURY)

Mr. Hillier moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act respecting jury trials for provincial offences / *Projet de loi 121, Loi concernant les procès devant jury pour les infractions provinciales.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, this bill amends the Provincial Offences Act by allowing persons charged with an offence to elect to be tried by a court composed of a judge and jury if any one of the following circumstances exists: (1) the penalty for the offence includes a fine of \$25,000 or more, seizure of property or a term of imprisonment; or (2) there is a reasonable likelihood that a conviction would result in the termination or suspension of a professional registration or licence or a business licence registration, permit or other approval.

A jury is composed of 12 persons selected in accordance with the Juries Act. The jury is required to give a unanimous verdict. If the jury cannot agree, the judge may adjourn the trial or discharge the jury and direct the empanelling of a new jury. The jury may make recommendations related to sentencing.

The Juries Act is amended to enable the Lieutenant Governor in Council to make regulations concerning the application of the act to a jury trial under the Provincial Offences Act.

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Mrs. Sandals moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / *Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to rise in the House this afternoon to introduce a bill that would provide a clear role for government in labour negotiations in the education sector, while continuing to respect the collective bargaining process. If passed, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act would be a unique, made-in-Ontario approach to collective bargaining in the education sector, with clear and accountable roles for government, trustee associations, school boards and employee groups.

When I was first appointed Minister of Education, my first priority was to rebuild relationships with our partners so we could move forward with a common purpose to improve student achievement. This means putting previous challenges behind us and working toward a bright future. This innovative legislation I am introducing here today will help the education sector move forward with a clear process and common understanding of collective bargaining in the education sector.

This proposed model for labour negotiations would establish two forums for discussion: a central table for significant province-wide issues and a local table to address purely local issues. Negotiations would take place at each level, guaranteeing that all issues, whether large or small, can be discussed in a clear, consistent and focused way.

The central negotiations would also include a clear, legally defined role for government. The previous process only included the local school boards as employers and federations or unions as employee representatives, without a prescribed role for government as the funder. There was also no legal status for the trustee associations to provide central representation for the school boards. We think that needs to change to better reflect current realities. The government does have a vested interest in the outcome of negotiations and requires a formal role at the central table.

The legislation would also provide for three-party ratification of any central agreement. This means that a central settlement will only be reached if all three parties—government, trustee associations and employee groups—agree to it. This ensures that all parties have a clear role and are accountable during the negotiation phase, while ensuring everyone plays an essential role in the final outcome.

1530

Speaker, this made-in-Ontario approach to collective bargaining was developed through extensive consulta-

tions with our education partners. We listened to their feedback. We used their input to draft a bill that respects and reflects their interests.

With this innovative legislation, our government is making its intention clear. We need a better way to bargain collectively, so everyone is part of a clear and consistent process.

It is so important to have the provisions of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act in place before the next round of negotiations. Current contracts in the education sector expire in August 2014, meaning the collective bargaining process will need to begin in the new year. We also know that next round won't be easy, as many of the fiscal realities from the previous round of negotiations remain, and I think all our partners, many of whom are in the gallery, understand that getting a new bill won't create easy negotiations—they will simply give us clear rules. But it is critical that we have this process in place that encourages discussion, promotes innovative ideas and ensures every partner has a clear role to play.

The School Boards Collective Bargaining Act will help us put that process in place, and I look forward to the support of all the members of the House on this very important piece of legislation.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize national Citizenship Week. Every year during this special week, we encourage Ontarians to reflect on the value of citizenship, what it means to be Canadian, and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. It's a time to acknowledge the contributions of those whose civic participation makes Canada and Ontario stronger.

Ontario is a place where we all share values and respect and celebrate people's differences. Our freedom of expression and religion is a model to the world.

Citizenship Week is also a time for us to celebrate one of our greatest strengths in this province, and that's our diversity.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to recognize the impact that Ontario's first-ever immigration strategy will have on the future of this great province. It's true that we need skilled workers to grow our economy, but our strategy recognizes that we also need individuals and their families to stay, put down roots and succeed in their new lives and give back to society. As an immigrant myself, I recognize how lucky I was that my family—my mother, my father and my two brothers—chose Ontario as the place to settle.

Together, we all in Ontario have shaped the province into one of the most desirable places to live on this planet. Day in and day out, Ontarians of all ages and from all walks of life give their valuable time to make their communities stronger and, through small and large gestures, they are changing the world.

Active citizenship is part of who we are as Ontarians. More than six million Ontarians who volunteer each year in our communities have a positive impact on our quality

of life, on our economic strength and on our social well-being. It's my privilege as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to recognize our exceptional volunteers across the province and say thank you to each and every one of them.

This year, close to 10,000 people, volunteers of all ages, made a huge difference and were recognized with the Volunteer Service Awards. Thank you for making Ontario a model for the world and for making our province an attractive place to live, work and invest.

We are one Ontario. We work together to build a successful, vital province where everyone has an opportunity to connect, contribute and achieve their goals.

I urge the members of this Legislature to recognize the active citizens in each one of their ridings over the next week.

And I say thank you so much for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Statements by ministries?

It's now time for responses.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to rise with a response to the minister's statement on the recently introduced School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

I know I don't have a whole lot of time because I'm going to share this response with my colleague from Prince Edward-Hastings, but I do want to say that we've been here for nine and a half months with this government. We've cleared the decks for the last month with a programming motion. We've been waiting to see what kind of jobs plan this government is going to put forth, and we've failed to see that. Again, we have another piece of legislation that has been introduced that does not talk about how we're going to kick-start private sector job growth.

Having said that, I think that this is a bill that has a capacity to encourage some debate in the sector. It outlines a particular role with respect to how collective bargaining should be rolled out. We will be carefully examining this bill and talking to the stakeholders in this sector.

I do want to state, though, that one of the stakeholders and one of the partners in education that we should be consulting on an ongoing basis, that I think has not been really readily understood within this piece of legislation nor the minister's remarks—are the partners that are our parents and students and what they say their priorities are with respect to the education sector. I'd be interested to talk to them to see what they're suggesting. I know, from our first foray into the education sector, they're certainly concerned about the fact that we're spending \$8 billion a year more in education while we have close to 300,000 fewer students. In the meantime, test scores have flatlined and some areas have declined.

We want to actually understand whether we're investing money in the right places in the education sector. I'm

not sure this bill is going to get us any further down the line in terms of understanding what our priorities are, but those are certainly ones that we want to put forward.

Certainly, we had a private member's bill in this Legislature that we debated recently with respect to regulation 274. It's another priority that our party and our caucus has put forth in the education sector. Again, we're not really sure how that's going to play out with respect to this bill.

At the end of the day, we are interested in discussing this with our partners in education, as the minister suggests, and with the stakeholders in the sector. I look forward to the debates that we're going to have on this matter.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. Todd Smith: I rise to mark national Citizenship Week.

If you walk up to the cenotaph in Belleville, you're struck by its prominent placement in the downtown area, the waters of the Moira River rushing by in the background as you gaze on the stone memorials displaying the names of the local fallen. Names like Gillespie, Burrows, Wheeler, Quick, Sharpe and Bell stand engraved in silent memorial to places like Vimy Ridge, Dieppe and Ortona, where the citizens of this country forged, amidst mud, blood, smoke and gunfire, who we are as Canadians.

To get to my office here at Queen's Park from that cenotaph, you have to travel the entire length of the Highway of Heroes, from CFB Trenton, where the repatriation ceremonies occurred, just beyond Belleville's borders; to the Don Valley Parkway and onto Bloor Street and then down Jarvis Street. You travel every mile of it to get here—and so did the names of the latest generation to forge the citizenship of this great country.

You may still find a Bell or a Quick among Canada's fallen, but we've added names like Hayakaze, Massouh, Diplaros and others to their ranks. That's because while the face of our great country has changed over the last hundred years, the sacrifice and commitment—the essence of what it is to be Canadian—is embraced and cherished by all who proudly wear that red maple leaf.

Because Canadians have lived and died for those values, hundreds of thousands of people from all around the world come to Canada every year seeking citizenship in this great country. They're drawn by peace and prosperity, democracy and dreams for a better future for their kids. They're drawn by the vision of Canada that those names in stone in Belleville died defending.

As I stand here today to recognize Citizenship Week, I want to congratulate all those new Canadians who have become citizens so far in 2013. Canada is a country of promise, given to us to be made better with each generation.

In closing, I'd like to quote the father of this great country, Sir John A. Macdonald: "Let us be English or let us be French ... but above all, let us be Canadians." In

my heart, I'm Canadian, et nous serons toujours des Canadiens. Happy Citizenship Week.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to address the introduction of this bill, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2013. We received the bill and plan to review it carefully. It is a big departure for Ontario, Speaker, one that needs to be studied carefully. I know there have been months of discussion. I appreciate the minister, the minister's political staff and ministry staff giving briefings yesterday, which allowed us to at least get a sense of the shape of this bill.

Parents and students, teachers and education workers, trustees and principals all will want to see how this bill is going to change education in this province and change education in their lives.

1540

This province and all concerned with education went through a searing experience with Bill 115 last year. This bill will not prevent a repetition of that experience, and that's unfortunate. Bill 115 violated constitutional rights. This bill will not provide more protection than the Constitution.

That's one issue, and one that has to be kept in mind as we go through our review of what's before us. The other is the issue of funding. The head of the Ontario Public School Boards Association has already warned that cuts to education budgets could lead to conflict with or without this bill.

Respect for democratic rights embodied in the Constitution and adequate funding are key to making education work. Without those two things, even the best bill—and I make no judgment at the moment—can't prevent further conflict.

This province deserves a high-quality education system. The people in that system—the students, the people providing the education and the support, the leadership and the trustees who provide political guidance—all deserve a framework within which they can do what they have to do: build Ontario's next generation.

Speaker, I'm looking forward to this debate, but I will make it clear in the course of this debate that Bill 115 could not have been prevented by this bill. Other things have to be uppermost in our minds if we want to ensure we don't go through that kind of conflict again.

CITIZENSHIP WEEK

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration: I listened intently, and of course he was absolutely right in what he had to say, but I think all of us need to remember what citizenship is. There were no Canadian citizens before 1947. You were either a British subject or a native person, as they were called in those days, or you were somebody living here, but there were no citizens.

It was the citizenship act of 1947 that actually set out who and what a Canadian citizen is, the thing that we take with such great pride today. Today, you can be a Canadian citizen in many ways. If you were a British subject before 1947, then you were automatically a Canadian citizen on the day that citizenship came into force. If you were a First Nations person, the same thing held true.

But since then, people become Canadian citizens in only a couple of ways. First of all, all of the Newfoundlanders who joined Confederation became Canadian citizens on the day that they joined this wonderful country. Or you can become a Canadian citizen if you are naturalized—that's primarily the way that most of it happens today—or if you were born here after 1947. Many of us, I guess, in this room are one or the other, because that was the seminal date.

But the important thing is, no matter how you got here and no matter how you are a citizen, we are all one people. Whether you were born here, whether you came here, whether you were here before 1947, it doesn't matter; we are all one people, and we are all very proud to be Canadian citizens. We have uncommon heritages, but what we do have is a common future, and we have that together.

Every year on July 1, I go to a citizenship ceremony in East York at 7 o'clock in the morning. It's the way I start Canada Day, and it's a glorious way to start the day, seeing people from all over the world becoming Canadian citizens and singing O Canada for the first time as citizens.

The people work together to build a strong, vibrant and free country, and we need to recognize the contributions that each and every one of them makes to this wonderful country every day. No matter who they are, no matter where they came from, they all make a contribution that we need to celebrate this week and, in fact, every day of the year.

PETITIONS

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

"Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of

care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I agree with this petition and will be signing it.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

“Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.”

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Aiden to deliver to the table.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Petitions? The member from Durham.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much for the opportunity to present a petition on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

“Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station;

“Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington the building of new capacity is

important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

“Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

“Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation already has spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new Darlington reactors;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That that Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station.”

I'm pleased to sign and support it and send it with Gurleen, one of the pages.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I couldn't agree more. I'm going to sign it and give it to Ian to be delivered to the table.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wind Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

1550

“Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations,

the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

"Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada's draft renewable energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

"Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given."

I agree with this petition, and I want to thank Betty Schneider for sending it to me.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

"Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be an expensive," cruel "and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

"Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners' Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types."

On behalf of the over a thousand dogs that have been euthanized and others, I'm going to sign this and give it to Victoria to be delivered to the table.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and vehicle emissions have declined significantly from 1998 to 2010; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

"Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to eliminate the Drive Clean program."

I support this petition and am pleased to give it to Sarhan to take to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Jim McDonnell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Auditor General confirmed in his December 2012 report that the Champlain CCAC had the longest wait time in Ontario in which 90% of their clients were placed; and

"Whereas the region requires a comprehensive plan assessing the future long-term-care bed needs of the region, as well as the provision of community care for independent and semi-independent seniors; and

"Whereas the number of Ontarians over 75 years of age is projected to increase by 30% by 2021, the year the baby boomers start to turn 75 years old, putting even more demand on the number of available LTC beds;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care immediately conduct a study to identify the current and future requirements for long-term-care beds and community care for independent and semi-independent seniors in our region of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, including the city of Cornwall;

"That such a study also identify future solutions for the current and future demand and the possible short- and long-term role the Cornwall General Hospital could play in fulfilling these requirements;

"That the Cornwall Community Hospital be funded to retain the Cornwall General Hospital until such a study is conducted and the role of this building is assessed in the solution to the LTC bed crisis."

I agree with this petition and will be handing it off to page Nicholas.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jim Wilson: "Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on eliminating physiotherapy services currently provided to seniors in retirement homes—and changing

the current provider of the service as of August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas the Minister of Health has announced a total of \$33 million in physiotherapy funding, or \$550 per senior, for 60,000 seniors, including those in retirement homes; and

“Whereas instead of the 100 to 150 visits per year a senior may receive now from their dedicated on-site OHIP physiotherapy staff, the change would mean a CCAC therapist would provide five to 10 visits on-site only to seniors who are bedridden or have an acute injury. All other ambulatory seniors would have to attend other community locations/clinics for physiotherapy and exercise off-site; and

“Whereas this change not only reduces the amount of money available, but also moves funds from the lowest-cost provider ... to the highest-cost provider...; and

“Whereas current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, will be delisted from OHIP by the government; and

“Whereas these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and falls risk;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To review and reverse the decision to eliminate OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors in retirement homes, our most vulnerable population and most at risk for falls; and continue with the provision of at least 100 treatments per year with the current low-cost OHIP physiotherapy providers.”

Madam Speaker, although the dates have passed, the petition is still quite relevant.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario.

“Whereas there are growing numbers of reported cases of abuse, neglect and sub-standard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options and frequently don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight;

“Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;

“We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask page Victoria to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Auditor General confirmed that no comprehensive evaluation was completed by the McGuinty government on the impact of the billion-dollar commitment of renewable energy on such things as net job losses and future energy prices, which will increase another 46% over the next five years; and

“Whereas poor decisions by the McGuinty government, such as the Green Energy Act, where Ontario pays up to 80 cents per kilowatt hour for electricity it doesn’t need and then must pay our neighbours to take it for free, and the billion-dollar cost of the seat-saving cancellation of the Oakville and Mississauga gas power plants, have contributed to” make Ontario’s costs of electricity “the highest in North America; and

“Whereas there has been no third-party study to look at the health, physical, social, economic and environmental impacts of wind turbines; and

“Whereas Ontario’s largest farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, have called for a suspension of industrial wind turbine development until the serious shortcomings can be addressed; and

“Whereas the McGuinty government has removed all decision-making powers from the local municipal governments when it comes to the location and size of industrial wind and solar farms;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Liberal government support Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson’s private member’s motion which calls for a moratorium on all industrial wind turbine development until a third-party health and environmental study has been completed.”

I agree with this petition and will sign it.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

“Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

“Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

“Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this petition, will affix my signature and give it to page Ian to deliver.

1600

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ENHANCING PATIENT CARE AND PHARMACY SAFETY (STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT) ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS AFIN D'AMÉLIORER LES SOINS AUX MALADES ET LA SÉCURITÉ DES PHARMACIES

Ms. Matthews moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

I rise today to speak further to the legislation I introduced on October 10 that, if passed, would amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act to give the Ontario College of Pharmacists authority to license hospital pharmacies, set standards and inspect hospital pharmacies in the same way it currently does for community pharmacies. I'm taking this action in order to follow through on my commitment to bring forward legislation this fall to license hospital pharmacies by the College of Pharmacists. This is a direct response to a recommendation from Dr. Jake Thiessen's report on chemotherapy underdosing released this past summer. With this, I'm making good on a promise I made to all of the patients and the families affected that had to go through this very difficult situation.

This proposed legislation is all about enhancing patient care and patient safety. If this legislation is passed, the Ontario College of Pharmacists would be able to conduct regular inspections of hospital pharmacies in order to monitor their compliance with licensing and inspection requirements and standards. The legislation we're debating today would also build on Dr. Thiessen's

findings by enhancing health regulators' ability to quickly identify incidents, communicate with partners and respond swiftly when needed.

Before outlining the proposed legislation in more detail, I would like to speak about the sequence of events that have brought us to this point. This past spring, Cancer Care Ontario, the provincial agency charged with steering and coordinating this province's cancer treatment and prevention efforts, alerted us that patients at four Ontario hospitals had received lower-than-prescribed dosages of the two cancer drugs that had been prescribed as part of these patients' chemotherapy treatments. The four Ontario hospitals involved—London Health Sciences Centre, Windsor Regional Hospital, Lakeridge Health and Peterborough Regional Health Centre—immediately took the underdosed chemotherapy drugs off their shelves and took the necessary precautions to ensure that proper doses of the drugs were administered. Hospital staff at all four hospitals worked around the clock to ensure that all of the affected patients and their families were notified as quickly as possible. The hospitals worked hard—very hard—to arrange immediate appointments for the affected patients with their oncologists.

We soon learned that 1,019 cancer patients in Ontario were affected by this underdosing. Another 183 patients in New Brunswick were affected. Speaker, I want to again express my deepest sympathy to everyone who had to go through this: to patients, their families and loved ones, and also to the hospital staff who really were impacted by this even as they worked to provide support to patients and their families.

Cancer is a hard battle. Too many Ontarians have to fight cancer. It goes without saying that all patients deserve to receive the drugs that are prescribed to them in the dosages they need. It is absolutely unacceptable that this did not happen in this case. Nobody should ever have to go through what the affected patients and their families have been through.

Speaker, at the same time, I was very proud of our health system's response to this situation. It is very clear that all health partners that were impacted by this took it very seriously, and worked closely and collaboratively and diligently to ensure patients and families had all the information they needed as quickly as possible. I was pleased to see that Dr. Thiessen in fact acknowledged the effectiveness of the health system's reaction. As he noted in his report, the response "demonstrated commendable crisis-stemming leadership. There was a concerted resolve to address the issues squarely and urgently, and to avoid further complicating incidents that might threaten patients' care." I can say with confidence that the response to this incident was swift and appropriate. The system acted in the best interests of patients and in the best interest of the public.

And during it all, our partners, including the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the Ontario Hospital Association, Cancer Care Ontario and front-line health workers were right there with us. I want to sincerely thank all of

the doctors, the nurses, the pharmacists, the pharmacy assistants and technicians, and all of the many other dedicated health professionals who worked so hard to help the families and patients impacted by this incident.

After the immediate response, my ministry and our health system partners were determined to learn from this situation. Ontario is a leader in cancer care within Canada and indeed around the world. In fact, an Ontarian who gets cancer has one of the best chances of survival in the world, according to the Cancer System Quality Index, and we are committed to taking steps to make our cancer system even stronger and to ensure that a situation like this one never happens again.

My ministry wrote to every business that it was able to identify that was possibly selling compounded drugs to obtain more information about their processes. The ministry also wrote to all of the province's hospitals to ensure that quality assurance processes were in place for all drugs purchased externally or prepared in a hospital.

To coordinate the ongoing response, I convened a working group of all the organizations who share responsibility on this issue. The group included my ministry, Cancer Care Ontario, Health Canada, the affected hospitals, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the New Brunswick Department of Health. I want to thank everyone who took part in this group for their hard work. To find answers and further strengthen cancer care, I appointed Dr. Jake Thiessen to lead a third-party review of the cancer drug system.

We soon learned that the company that mixed and supplied these drugs to hospitals fell into an oversight gap between the Ontario College of Pharmacists and Health Canada. Once we discovered this gap, our government moved very quickly to fill it. Working with the Ontario College of Pharmacists, we approved a regulation that extended the college's oversight to premises that prepare drugs but were neither pharmacies nor manufacturers. This means the college can inspect these premises to ensure that they are operating safely. In fact, Speaker, I can tell you today that these drug preparation premises have already been inspected by the college and they have passed those inspections. The inspection results are publicly available on the College of Pharmacists website.

1610

Our government also introduced a regulation requiring hospitals to purchase or obtain drugs only from regulated or approved sources such as a drug preparation premise, a community pharmacy or a Health Canada-approved manufacturer. Health Canada has ensured that drug compounders in Ontario know that they must be regulated, either by Health Canada or by the Ontario College of Pharmacists, and the Ontario Hospital Association has surveyed Ontario's hospitals to determine which ones are using external drug suppliers.

Without question, we needed to understand all of the information about how this happened, so that we could ensure it would not happen again. That's why, as I mentioned a moment ago, I appointed Dr. Jake Thiessen,

the founding director of the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy, to conduct an independent review of the province's cancer drug supply chain. His review focused on the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs at the four hospitals here and the one in New Brunswick. His job was to find out how it happened and why, and then to provide recommendations on how to prevent it from happening again.

Dr. Thiessen conducted a thorough investigation to determine the root cause of the underdosing incident. In addition to confirming that our health care system reacted quickly and appropriately to the situation, Dr. Thiessen's report makes a number of recommendations on how to achieve an even stronger drug supply system.

I would like to thank Dr. Thiessen for his exceptional work in examining this issue and providing thoughtful recommendations. His recommendations are sound, and I have fully endorsed each one of them.

My ministry has established a task force composed of our government, Health Canada, the Ontario Hospital Association, the Ontario College of Pharmacists and a representative from one of the affected hospitals to oversee the implementation of 11 of Dr. Thiessen's 12 recommendations.

Those 11 recommendations do not require any legislative amendments. The proposed legislation before the House today directly responds to Dr. Thiessen's 12th recommendation. Dr. Thiessen recommended that we need to ensure that the medication management and processing systems in hospital pharmacies are standardized. The Ontario College of Pharmacists already has the authority to inspect community pharmacies; however, it currently has no oversight of hospital pharmacies. That responsibility is currently left to individual hospitals.

Dr. Thiessen found that hospital pharmacies were not the cause of the underdosing incident. However, out of an abundance of caution and in the interest of protecting patients, Dr. Thiessen recommended that the college be empowered to inspect those hospital premises. This would allow for a consistent standard and mandatory compliance of operations when they have the potential to put patient safety at risk.

That's why we are proposing to amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, which is the statute that gives the college the authority to license and inspect pharmacies in the community. The act already sets out the framework the college needs to perform inspections, provides for quality assurance monitoring and enforces licensing requirements. This proposed legislation would modify it for the hospital context.

Right now, there are about 2,000 pharmacists and 1,500 pharmacy technicians working in about 260 hospital sites in Ontario. Hospitals would be required to comply with the college's accreditation and inspection requirements. The college would be responsible for establishing the frequency of inspections and the inspection standards. The college would consult extensively with hospital stakeholders on the development of the inspection standards and processes, and may pilot the inspec-

tion scheme with volunteer hospitals first to inform the development of the program.

Secondly, our proposal would build in powers for the government to make regulations extending the college's oversight of pharmacies in other health care settings in the future if need be. This would allow future expansion of the college's oversight to ensure patients are protected without requiring further amendments to legislation.

We have been working very closely with the college and the Ontario Hospital Association on these proposed changes, and we will continue to do so. Both organizations are supportive of the licensing proposal for hospital pharmacies. Both organizations have expressed strong interest in working together to develop necessary standards and processes for the new licensing scheme if this legislation is passed.

At the same time, I'm proposing to further enhance patient care and safety by building on Dr. Thiessen's findings and making amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, and the Public Hospitals Act. These changes would improve patient care and safety by enhancing the health professional regulatory system's ability to quickly identify and respond to incidents and to communicate with health care partners.

In this incident, the health care system reacted quickly and in a coordinated way to inform and protect patients and families. But this just underlines the importance of ensuring that the health system, including health regulatory colleges, is able to share information and coordinate a swift and appropriate response to any situation that may pose harm to Ontario patients. Simply put, regulatory colleges and their health system partners must be able to work seamlessly together in responding to incidents where patient care is at risk, just as they did in this case. So this legislation proposes to do a number of additional things.

First, it would enable health regulatory colleges to more readily share information with public health authorities. If this legislation is passed, health regulatory colleges would be able to share more information with public health authorities more quickly if they became aware of information that may have public health implications. Local health units could then determine whether they needed to take action to protect public health.

Secondly, it would permit health regulatory colleges to share information with a hospital that was obtained through a college's investigation of a member who was employed or provided privileges by that hospital. Health regulatory colleges would be able to disclose investigation-related information to hospitals to improve quality and to protect patients.

Thirdly, it would require a hospital or an employer to report to health regulatory colleges if a regulated health professional has voluntarily restricted his or her practice or privileges because of concerns about his or her conduct or his or her practice. This would help the college determine whether further action would be required.

Fourthly, it would allow the government to more quickly appoint a college supervisor in order to address

any serious concerns regarding the quality of a college's government and management. Appointing a supervisor is a last-resort option, but this would allow us to more quickly respond to concerns about a college's operations that are putting the public at risk.

1620

Finally, it would provide health regulatory colleges the flexibility to focus their investigation of complaints to those matters that could constitute professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity. By allowing colleges to focus on investigating complaints that are relevant to a member's professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity, they will be able to address such complaints more quickly.

I would like to thank the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Hospital Association. We have worked together diligently over the years, and especially in the spring and early summer, as we investigated what happened in the chemotherapy underdosing situation, and we worked to ensure that it does not happen again.

The people of Ontario deserve the highest standards of care from our health system, which is why we are continuing to act on Dr. Thiessen's recommendations.

I believe this proposed legislation represents common ground for all members in the House. When it comes to the safety and quality of our health care system, I am confident that all of us agree Ontarians demand and deserve nothing less than the best. It is imperative that patients and their families continue to have full confidence that they are receiving the highest-quality and most effective care in our hospitals. This means getting the medications they need, in the proper dosages, every time. This bill, if passed, would strengthen drug safety in hospitals, it would enhance patient care and safety across the health system, and it would improve the system's ability to quickly respond to incidents.

Our government has shown our resolve to address the problem as fast as possible to ensure the safety of Ontarians. We have learned from this situation, and we are determined that something like this will not happen again. Now I call upon both opposition parties to work with us to move this legislation forward. Working together, we can make our health care system even stronger and safer for Ontarians.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I am pleased to rise to further expand on what the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care has said about our proposed Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, 2013. The minister has already spoken about the sequence of events that led up to the introduction of our proposed legislation, and of course our government's greatest concern is to provide the best possible care to patients suffering from cancer, and so I feel it is important to recognize that Ontario is a leader in cancer care.

As the minister has already remarked, according to the Cancer System Quality Index, an Ontarian who is diagnosed with cancer has one of the best chances of survival

anywhere in the world. As a physician, I have seen the remarkable efforts so many health professionals make every single day to help patients and families beat this terrible disease. I want to thank them for the vital and inspiring work that they do.

I also know that our government has made a number of important investments in cancer care over the past 10 years. Quite simply, Madam Speaker, our cancer care system has improved significantly in that time. We know that if you want to make something better, you have to measure it. That's why, today, we measure more, we know more and we report more. We remain steadfast in our commitment to greater accountability and continuous improvement.

But despite the best efforts of our government and thousands of doctors, researchers, advocates, health partners and professionals all across this province, we know that every year, too many sons and daughters and parents and friends and loved ones are diagnosed with this terrible disease. Early detection is key. Cancer screening is easy, and it saves lives. I know that it is imperative that Ontarians get screened for cancer. I am proud to say that our government has worked hard to expand screening services and availability across this province.

We broadened the scope of the Ontario Breast Screening Program, or OBSP, in 2011. Now high-risk women are screened earlier, starting at age 30. That works out to 90,000 more screens over three years. We have expanded the OBSP to make it more accessible to women in every community across Ontario. We have added 67 new breast screening sites across the province, bringing the total to 167 sites, and we are funding nearly 325,000 more screens.

We launched the province's first province-wide colorectal cancer screening program to combat the second-deadliest form of cancer in Canada. In 2009, we further expanded cancer detection by funding the PSA test, which helps to fight prostate cancer, the most common cancer among Canadian men. Additionally, Speaker, our government has integrated screening reminders for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer into one coordinated system.

We are working to improve treatment for Ontarians who find themselves battling cancer. As of this past July, 98% of cancer patients in Ontario started radiation treatment within the national four-week target. That's up from 70% back in 2006, and we cut wait times for cancer surgery on average by 40%. We have opened or expanded 13 cancer centres in communities like Oshawa, Sudbury, Newmarket and Niagara. We are funding 80 additional cancer drug indications, and we more than tripled funding for cancer-fighting drugs under the new drug funding program.

Lastly, Speaker, because we recognize that the best way to fight cancer is not to get it in the first place, we have worked to prevent it. Our government's commitment to cancer prevention is a key component of our action plan for health care. We have toughened tobacco

laws, banned smoking in public places and are encouraging more Ontarians to quit smoking as part of Smoke-Free Ontario.

Our government has also introduced a free vaccine to protect young women against the human papillomavirus, which is the major cause of cervical cancer. Some 75,000 grade 8 girls receive the vaccine every year.

I was delighted to see our legislation restricting the sale and marketing of tanning services for young people passed into law just a couple of weeks ago. This important legislation will protect young Ontarians from the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation caused by tanning beds. As I said in the House two weeks ago, the use of tanning beds by young people significantly increases the risk of contracting the dangerous skin cancer malignant melanoma. This legislation will further government's commitment to protect Ontarians from getting cancer.

It is clear, Speaker, that Ontario's cancer care and health care systems are amongst the best in the world, but we know there is always more that can be done to make them even stronger and safer.

Our government was determined to learn from the underdosing incident earlier this year. The minister has already spoken at length about our response, working with our health care partners to protect and inform patients and, above all, to ensure that a situation like this never happens again. The proposed legislation we are considering today is a key part of that response.

I would now like to go into greater detail about the proposed legislation and how it would work to strengthen our health care system and protect patients.

1630

First and foremost, this legislation is intended to put into effect Dr. Jake Thiessen's recommendation that the government should authorize the Ontario College of Pharmacists, or OCP, to inspect and license hospital pharmacies. That may sound pretty straightforward, but in fact the ministry considered several legislative options to establish the OCP's oversight of hospital pharmacies.

The Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, or DPRA, was selected as the most appropriate vehicle. Because, first of all, this legislation already establishes the licensing and inspections framework specific to pharmacies, this would maintain a consistent approach to the regulation of pharmacies in Ontario, and it would also be consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions.

So how would this legislation work in practice? We recognize that certain provisions in the DPRA are specific to the retail pharmacy context and may not be appropriate to hospital pharmacies; for example, provisions concerning the ownership of pharmacies. Therefore, the proposed amendments take this into account, and only certain provisions of the DPRA that make sense for hospital pharmacies would apply; for example, accreditation, quality assurance and inspection, and enforcement.

Let me start with what we mean when we say "hospital pharmacy." The proposed act defines a hospital pharmacy as referring to "the primary location or locations in

the hospital where drugs are compounded, dispensed or supplied from, together with any other location in the hospital where drugs are stored or supplied.”

These locations are where drugs are compounded, dispensed or supplied for hospital patients by a hospital. In other words, a hospital pharmacy is the non-public central area within a hospital where drugs are prepared or used for hospital patients. This includes the locations where these drugs are stored and supplied, such as in night or floor stock cabinets in surgical wards, or in the emergency department.

To be clear, this does not include retail pharmacies located in a hospital that are open to the public and where anyone may purchase prescription and non-prescription drugs. These retail pharmacies are already licensed by the Ontario College of Pharmacists, just like any other community pharmacy that sells prescription drugs.

To ensure accountability, each affected hospital corporation would hold one or more certificates of accreditation, issued by the OCP, in order to operate a hospital pharmacy. The hospital corporation would be subject to the OCP's disciplinary proceedings if it fails to comply with legislative or regulatory requirements, any term, condition or limitation applied to its certificate of accreditation, or if it commits an act of proprietary misconduct.

Every hospital that operates a hospital pharmacy would be required to designate a contact person for the purposes of facilitating communication with the OCP, and must inform the OCP of the contact person's identity. The contact person would not need to be a member of the OCP.

In terms of quality assurance, under the proposed legislation, the OCP would be provided regulation-making authority to prescribe hospital pharmacy accreditation standards, including the maintenance, space, equipment and facilities required. The OCP's regulation-making authority would be similar to what it has for community pharmacies.

Also similar to community pharmacies, the OCP indicates its accreditation program objective is raising the bar on standards through education and remediation. It is not focused on punitive enforcement; that is, suspension and revocation. At the same time, it would take immediate action if patient care and safety were at risk.

The OCP has indicated that it would consult extensively with stakeholders in the development of any regulations, bylaws and standards with respect to hospital pharmacies. The proposed amendments would require the OCP to circulate any proposed regulations for a minimum 60-day period.

To carry out inspections, the OCP's current powers of inspection with respect to community pharmacies would be extended to hospital pharmacies. As a result, the OCP would be authorized to appoint an inspector who could, among other things, enter a hospital pharmacy and inspect any document or object that is in the pharmacy or is relevant to pharmacy practice. Any requirement, protocol, standards or policies relating to inspections would be

established by the OCP through the appropriate mechanisms, such as regulations and bylaws.

Transparency is important to our government because it drives accountability. We expect that the OCP would post the outcome of inspections of hospital pharmacies on its website, as it does the outcomes of its inspections of community pharmacies and drug preparation premises.

Enforcement is an important component of this proposed legislation. While the OCP's accreditation program would focus on educational and remedial approaches to help hospitals meet licensing standards, enforcement powers are nevertheless necessary. The OCP's current powers to take disciplinary measures would be extended to hospital pharmacies. This means that the hospital corporation could be referred to discipline committees if there is reason to believe that the hospital pharmacy fails to conform to the DPRA and the regulations; to conform to any term, condition or limitation on a certificate of accreditation; or an act of proprietary misconduct has been committed.

A panel of the discipline committee may impose specified terms, conditions and limitations, suspend or revoke a certificate of accreditation, or fine a person up to \$100,000. Where the OCP proposes to take action involving a hospital pharmacy, the OCP would be required to give notice of the proposed action to the minister prior to taking action and to give the minister any information the minister requests.

As disciplinary action by the OCP would likely be the outcome of repeated lapses in achieving licensing or inspection standards, it may be an indicator of a wider systemic problem with the administration of a hospital. Requiring the OCP to give notice would allow the minister to take separate corrective action, if necessary, under the Public Hospitals Act. This might mean, for example, appointing an investigator to review hospital administration, or appointing a hospital supervisor.

The DPRA currently requires the OCP to publish all discipline committee panel decisions and reasons, or a summary, in its annual report or another college publication. This would allow patients and their families to view any disciplinary action against a hospital pharmacy. We hope this would never happen, but if it does, Ontarians would know what disciplinary action has been imposed on their hospital pharmacy.

The proposed legislation also includes new regulatory powers. If passed, the Lieutenant Governor in Council would be giving the regulation-making authority to designate premises in or associated with a health or custodial institution as an “institutional pharmacy” subject to the OCP's oversight. This would allow the government to extend the oversight of the OCP to other health care settings if the need arises and after consulting with stakeholders.

1640

Additionally, if passed, the OCP would be provided additional regulation-making authority. This would allow the OCP to establish classes of certificates of accreditation with respect to all pharmacies, and set terms and

conditions with respect to those classes. This allows the OCP to create new classes of licences and tailor licensing requirements to those classes. For example, the OCP would be able to issue a class of licences for pharmacies that do sterile compounding and another class of licence for those that do not.

The OCP would also be granted regulation-making authority respecting the operation of hospital pharmacies and clarifying the application to hospital pharmacies of applicable provisions of the DPRA. This recognizes that hospital pharmacies are different from community pharmacies and gives the OCP the ability to make regulations that clarify the application of certain provisions of the DPRA.

Finally, if passed, this legislation would grant the OCP the power to make regulations respecting the operation of institutional pharmacies and clarifying the application to institutional pharmacies of applicable provisions of the DPRA. This would ensure that the OCP could make regulations concerning institutional pharmacies should the government make regulations in the future to extend the OCP's oversight to other health care settings.

Speaker, it's important to note that if the proposed legislation is passed it would be proclaimed into force in two phases. In the first phase, provisions relating to the OCP's authority to make regulations concerning hospital pharmacies would be proclaimed into force. In the second phase, remaining provisions would be proclaimed after the OCP has completed the inspection of all hospital pharmacies. These pharmacies would have to be licensed and accredited by that time. If the legislation is passed, this would allow the OCP to develop regulations more quickly on licensing standards and begin the process of inspections.

Prior to approving any regulations, our government would ensure that extensive consultations would occur with stakeholders and that the proposed regulations enhance patient care and safety, and ensure that hospitals can continue to deliver the quality of care and services that are expected by their communities.

I'm pleased to say that the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the Ontario Hospital Association and the Canadian Society of Hospital Pharmacists are all supportive of our proposed amendments.

Now I'd like to discuss in greater detail our proposed amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act of 1991, the RHPA. The chemotherapy underdosing has brought to the fore how important it is to ensure that the system works in concert. It is clear that health regulatory colleges and their health system partners must be able to share information, collaborate and develop coordinated responses in order to effectively address issues that may put patients in harm's way, just as they did in this situation. More than ever before, Ontarians expect regulators and other health care actors to work together better in order to respond quickly and appropriately in situations where public health and patient care may be at risk. It is along these principles that the proposed amendments to the RHPA and the Public Hospitals Act have

been developed. I want to assure you, Speaker, that these proposed changes are also consistent with the results of past consultations with health system stakeholders.

First, with respect to sharing information with public health authorities, health regulatory colleges are currently unable to share information that may have public health implications except in accordance with exemptions to confidentiality rules. For example, during the course of an investigation, a college becomes aware of an issue related to potential infection prevention and control lapses that are not related to the professional under investigation—there may or may not be a problem, but the college wouldn't be able to find out, as its powers of investigation are limited to the professional they are investigating. As a former medical officer of health, I can tell you that public health authorities would want to know of infractions related to lack of infection control, but unless there are reasonable grounds for the college to believe that the sharing of such information is necessary to eliminate or reduce a serious risk of significant bodily harm to a person or group, the college cannot share the investigator's concerns with public health.

Ontarians expect colleges to share public-health-related information with those who can do something about it, whether it is the local public health unit or the chief medical officer of health. This proposed legislation would add an exemption to the existing confidentiality provisions to allow health regulatory colleges to share with public health authorities information that may be required for the administration of the Health Protection and Promotion Act, or HPPA. The HPPA would thus join other specified acts where this is the case, including the Health Insurance Act, the Independent Health Facilities Act, the Coroners Act and the federal Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. The result would be that colleges would be better able to share relevant and important information with public health authorities and do it more quickly.

Now I'll turn to information that should be available to public hospitals. In terms of sharing information with public hospitals or other prescribed persons, currently, when a college acquires information during an investigation that may be relevant to patient care and safety in hospitals, it would not be able to share this information with hospitals except in accordance with a specified exemption to the existing confidentiality rules. So let's say a college investigates a radiologist working in an independent health facility and gets information relevant to a hospital where the radiologist also practises, and this information could improve the hospital processes, which could result in better patient care. Unless the college can establish that the sharing of such information would fall within an existing confidentiality exemption, the college cannot share it.

This legislation, if passed, would allow colleges to more readily share information with a public hospital where a college is investigating a member or where the information was obtained by an investigator appointed by the registrar. A regulation would set out the purposes for

which such information could be shared, together with any restrictions regarding the sharing of the information by a college with hospitals as well as with other persons. Accordingly, a new Lieutenant Governor in Council regulation-making authority would be created to prescribe any additional persons—for example, other than public hospitals—with whom colleges could share information where a college is investigating a member; and prescribe purposes for, and any limitations on, the sharing of such information.

If this proposed amendment were passed, a public hospital would be able to receive information from a college in a timely fashion, where appropriate, regarding college investigations that may be relevant to the safety and care of their patients and take any necessary and appropriate action.

1650

A college could only disclose information for a purpose to be set out in regulation and subject to any prescribed limitations.

Regarding mandatory reporting to the colleges by public hospitals and employers, it is the current requirement to make a mandatory report that includes situations where an employer intended to terminate the employment of a member or to revoke that member's privileges due to misconduct, incompetence or incapacity, but did not do so because the professional resigned or relinquished his or her privileges.

The Public Hospitals Act currently also requires reporting where hospital physicians resign during the course of an investigation due to issues of competence, negligence or conduct. Colleges have expressed concerns that such mandatory reports are not being made often enough. For example, a physician may resign or give up privileges pre-emptively or agree to restrict privileges, or a nurse may restrict practice to avoid an investigation or disciplinary action.

Our proposed amendment would require a mandatory report to the health regulatory college where:

- a member resigns, or voluntarily relinquishes or restricts his or her privileges or practice; and

- a person who employs or offers privileges to a member has reasonable grounds to believe that the resignation is related to the member's professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

What this would lead to is the filing of a mandatory report by a hospital or other employer whenever a regulated professional resigns or voluntarily relinquishes or restricts his or her privileges or practice and there are reasonable grounds to believe it is related to the member's professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

If passed, this would close loopholes that have been used to avoid reporting such instances to the colleges. It would also modify existing provisions that may prevent colleges from receiving information that could be relevant to a member's practice and to take appropriate regulatory action on that basis.

Speaker, if this legislation is passed, regulatory colleges would be better able to carry out their mandate to act in the public interest and protect patients.

The next proposed amendment concerns the minister's ability to appoint a college supervisor.

Currently, in order for the minister to appoint a college supervisor, the following five steps would potentially have to take place:

- (1) The ministry would have to become aware of concerns regarding a college's administration or governance.

- (2) The minister would have to use her powers under the RHPA to order the college council to take corrective action, conduct an operational review and so forth.

- (3) The minister would have to decide that the appointment of a supervisor is appropriate or necessary.

- (4) The minister would then have to wait until she is of the opinion that the council has not complied with the requirement she had already issued.

- (5) Only then could the minister recommend the appointment of a college supervisor to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

Our proposed amendment would remove the requirement that the minister must be of the opinion that a council of the college has not complied with a minister's requirement issued under the RHPA before the Lieutenant Governor in Council can appoint a college supervisor.

The amendment, if passed, would more closely align the college supervisor provisions with the hospital supervisor provisions under the Public Hospitals Act. Under that legislation, a supervisor may be appointed when it is in the public interest to do so.

If this legislation is passed, the Lieutenant Governor in Council would be able to appoint a college supervisor where the minister considers it appropriate or necessary. This would normally only occur as a last resort. The ministry would always work with the college first to address concerns.

Lastly, Speaker, this legislation, would, if passed, modify the manner in which health regulatory colleges handle some complaints. Currently, a college must select a panel of its Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee—or ICRC—to investigate all complaints received. That's the case even when a complaint is made, for instance, against a dentist for publicly supporting fluoridation of municipal drinking water; in other words, on matters that do not impact patient care and safety—or, for example, a complaint is made against a nurse practitioner for prescribing the wrong medication; however, the wrong drug indicated in the written complaint is actually the generic name for a branded drug that the complainant believes should be prescribed. In both instances, a college must appoint a panel of the ICRC to investigate and dispose of the complaint, even though the complaint, if found to be accurate, would not constitute professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

The investigation of such complaints places the college's resources under unnecessary pressure and prevents more timely investigation of complaints that are more clearly relevant to patient care and safety. Under our proposal, the RHPA would give more discretion to the

college registrar. If this legislation is passed, it would allow the registrar, in a given situation, to determine that no panel of the ICRC would be convened because the allegations contained in the complaint, if established, would be unlikely to constitute professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity on the part of the member. The complainant would have the option of requesting a review of the registrar's determination by a panel of the college's ICRC that is struck expressly for that purpose. Complainants and members would be notified appropriately through the process.

This would streamline the complaints process and provide a quick response to complainants where it is immediately clear to the registrar that it is not reasonable to believe that the allegations contained in the complaint, if established, could constitute professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity.

Furthermore, all decisions regarding complaints would be rendered more quickly and efficiently as the caseload for panels of the ICRC would drop under this new process. Faster dispositions would mean faster public awareness of a potential concern about a member where a complaint is referred to a college's discipline committee, and the public would be assured that action is being taken in a timely fashion.

All these proposed changes would allow the health regulatory system and its health care partners to communicate and work together more closely on an integrated response to either prevent or to limit the impact on patients should future incidents occur. The changes in this proposed legislation build on an underlying theme of Dr. Thiessen's findings, which was the importance of various system actors communicating and working together on an integrated response when an adverse event occurs.

I want to assure you, Speaker, as well as the members of this House and all Ontarians, that ongoing consultations between the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the Ontario Hospital Association and health regulatory colleges and associations will continue.

As Ontarians, I think we can be very proud of our cancer care system. I think we can also be very proud of how our health care system responded to the underdosing incident. The system acted precisely as it should: in the best interests of patients and in the best interests of the public.

I want to thank the many doctors and health professionals who worked so hard to inform and care for affected patients and their families. I want to thank the many people and organizations, including Dr. Thiessen, who worked together to respond to this incident and to learn from it. Together, we will continue to work to make our excellent health care system even better. And I'd like to thank the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the Ontario Hospital Association, Cancer Care Ontario and all our health regulatory colleges for their diligence and commitment to patient safety.

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The legislation being debated today would, if passed, further strengthen oversight to better protect patients and

it would streamline the health regulatory system and improve its ability to protect the public interest.

I urge all the members of this House to join us in our commitment to strengthening our health care system and enhancing protections for patients. We have a collective responsibility to do all that we can to prevent any situation like this from occurring again. I'm confident that we all share in that commitment, and that's why I urge you all to pass this important legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The member for—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Elgin—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Elgin—Middlesex—London. Sorry.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I think the member from Stoney Creek, Mr. Miller, is about the only Speaker who gets my riding right. I think he sits at home and studies where people live.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Flash cards—yes, I believe that.

I want to make a few comments on what was spoken. I'm going to be speaking in a few minutes anyhow, so I won't go on to what I'm going to say. The ministry itself has said that this is the only recommendation that needs legislation. I think the government has failed on their part to listen to what occurred at committee when, in fact, Dr. Thiessen, who wrote the report, actually came out and said that there should be regulations put in place for the GPOs that are bidding on these contracts. I hope the government is going to be looking at that bill and not just put all the fluff in front and think they're saving the world by bringing forth this legislation—and all the wonderful things that this ministry has done in the first, I don't know, 40 minutes of this discussion. Both speakers talked about how wonderful the Ministry of Health is and the fact that they're saving the world, whereas if we go back home to our ridings we know there are lots of problems with the Ministry of Health that this government should be looking at and fixing, which they aren't. I have a constituent of mine who needs back surgery, and he can't even get a meeting with a specialist. He's able to get it out of country within a day if he chooses to go to the United States; however, he can't afford to go there. Now he has to wait, and he's probably going to lose his job because pretty soon he won't be walking.

I think there are certain situations—so this government cannot sit and continually tell us our health system is great and wonderful and they're saving the world.

I'd also like to make notice that the Minister of Health spoke of how great it was that they've told our hospitals that they have to buy from reputable sources. I think that's common sense to the average person at home: that we hope they're buying their needles, their syringes and their drugs from businesses that aren't underhanded. If they aren't, I hope—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Comments and questions?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I listened to what the Minister of Health and the member from Oak Ridges—Markham had to say about this.

We are here today talking about this bill because for 15 months cancer patients in Ontario received diluted chemotherapy drugs. A total of 1,202 Ontarians are now living with this horrendous question mark over their heads as to the fact that, "I received diluted chemo drugs. Will that have an effect on my health? Will that have an effect on my recovery?" "Is this the reason why my loved one is no longer with me?"

The minister and everybody in this House agreed that the committee should look at this and should look at what went wrong. Who dropped the ball? How could it be that for 15 months dozens of pharmacists and health care workers dealt with those products and nobody noticed that it was not concentration-specific, which is something that is fairly basic in the health care system? This is how you get your drugs. The minister brought forward a bill that is apparently supposed to assure us that this will never happen again. But she did this before the committee that has listened to the evidence, that has taken the time to ask witnesses what happened, has actually completed their work. It's a little strange that apparently we have the solution here in front of us by the Minister of Health, yet the very committee that is looking at what went wrong so that it never happens again has not completed its report. I find this a little hard to understand, but then, there are many things hard to understand in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. A test of good government is how quickly it responds to an emergency situation. Here's what happened. This situation came to the attention of the authorities in March; that is, the hospital pharmacy misprescription. It came to our attention in March. The next month—within 30 days—we had appointed an inquiry headed by a very distinguished pharmacist, Dr. Thiessen. We told him to get on to it, see what happened, give us some recommendations: "Don't waste time; get on it right away."

He delivered his report on July 12, so he did all of his work within two months. He had 12 recommendations. A month later, on September 12, the government set up a task force to implement his 11—he made 12 recommendations. We set up a task force to implement the 11 recommendations that did not require legislative change. His 12th recommendation required some legislative change. That's what we are dealing with today. That's how seriously and how quickly we responded to this situation.

If this legislation is passed, it will implement his 12th recommendation, which says that the College of Pharmacists should have oversight responsibility for the dispensing of pharmacies at hospitals, and the dispensing pharmacies at hospital will have to be subject to the same oversight, standards, controls, and all of those things as a pharmacy on Main Street, Ontario. That's a very rapid response in—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise and comment on the debate thus far on Bill 117. I will say that I do find it frustrating that we have, and request, experts to assist us when things go wrong—and let's not kid ourselves; things very much went wrong in this situation. So we asked an expert, Dr. Thiessen, to bring forward suggestions on how we can improve the process, and what we end up with is implementing one of 12.

You can't ask for the expert and then not listen to him. Clearly, the minister and the parliamentary assistant have talked about the background of Dr. Thiessen and how valuable his recommendations were, which is very appreciated, but they mean nothing if we as legislators won't implement them.

I'm quite looking forward to our own Progressive Conservative expert, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, who is going to share his thoughts on how Bill 117 can be improved and what we need to do better to protect the citizens and the patients of Ontario. I think that we all need and have a responsibility to ensure that what happened and why we are ultimately here discussing Bill 117 never happen again. That is our responsibility as legislators. It's wonderful that we've brought in some experts to assist us in that goal, but ultimately it is our responsibility to make sure it never happens again and put those processes in place. So I look forward to the debate that will happen when our critic from Elgin–Middlesex–London participates in the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The parliamentary assistant has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the members of the opposition—Elgin–Middlesex–London, Nickel Belt, Dufferin–Caledon—I'm really disappointed. As the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs has said, we worked as a government within our responsibilities with all speed. This is a very complicated issue, as those of us who are on the Standing Committee on Social Policy have come to understand, and we as a committee are continuing to deliberate on other issues that perhaps need a certain amount of attention. But as it comes to what is required in terms of legislation, we have acted incredibly swiftly. This is a fairly complex matter. Certainly within my comments, I had to reread them many times myself so I became fully cognizant of the legal language required to put this particular initiative in place.

Certainly, as a committee, we all saw immediately the wisdom, as was espoused also by Dr. Jake Thiessen, in regulating hospital pharmacies. That was clearly a gap. We discovered regulatory gaps at the federal level, and we continue to explore those at committee. We had a member from Health Canada attend committee yesterday, and many of Dr. Jake Thiessen's recommendations do require federal oversight as well. There's a lot of information related to this particular way of dispensing drugs through the use of companies that do the mixing off-site from hospitals.

It's a complex matter. This is something that we acted very, very speedily to fix, and I urge all members to get on with it and pass this bill.

1710

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: First of all, before I start I just want to send congratulations to the Minister of Health. She's a new grandma. She tweeted it on the weekend. I just wanted to say congratulations, have a moment of civility in this House before we tend to bash.

Why are we here, Speaker? I've found in my two years I've been here that we're following a government that has been mired in scandal since the start of my tenure as an MPP: the fact that now they're dealing with a \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal, a cost that's going to be in our energy bills further down the road, and the fact that this government has now become a reactive government instead of a proactive government. The problems that they are creating, they're reacting to; the problems they were ignoring, they're reacting to. I think there's a lot of movement out there. They could become a proactive government and again become a government that people could be proud of, but instead they've become a government of reaction. I think that is why we're here: Due to the reaction to this chemo drug scandal, they have come up with this bill in order to placate what has occurred.

Why are we here? I think I'll give a quick explanation of what occurred just so that people at home who are listening or people who are going to read the Hansard can have an understanding of how the dilution occurred. What happened, whether it was Baxter or Marchese, the two companies involved, was basically taking a 100-millilitre bag full of normal saline solution—this is how Marchese produced it. They get the powder of the gemcitabine or cyclophosphamide drug and put in a little diluent to make it into a liquid. After some time, when it becomes a liquid, they take that drug and draw it out and put it into the bag.

The problem that occurred in this case is that when Baxter had the contract, Baxter would get an empty bag, put in the active drug and then put in enough normal saline to equal 100 millilitres. In the other case, what happened with Marchese is the fact that they used a pre-filled bag that's commercially available on the market, marked 100 millilitres, and shot in the medication in order to make the product.

The problem that occurs—and it's well-known throughout the health care industry—is that all pre-made bags have a little bit of overfill in them. I'm sure they have their reasons, but that is just what occurs in the industry. So a 100-millilitre bag might have 107 millilitres, might have 110 millilitres; a 250-millilitre bag might have 260 millilitres etc., as it goes up. So it's not exactly what is written on the bag that's the volume in there. That is how the dilution occurred.

As a result, gemcitabine was, on average, 7% diluted and cyclophosphamide, 10% diluted. This is what occurred. So people did not have the appropriate medication dose that the doctor ordered after the processing of these compounded medications, and that is how we ended up with the diluted drug problem.

I'm just reading from the Hansard committee reports on Dr. Thiessen. He just went over exactly where it came from here: "The simple statement of specifications"—to the contract that was given—"led Marchese to use a process that failed to adjust for the overfill volumes.

"Finally, the hospitals did not correct their patient-specific doses—because it's an amount that they need per patient—to factor in the overfill, because there was no clarifying patient-related instructions from Marchese, and the hospitals were therefore unaware of the lower concentrations. This is how patients were underdosed an average of 7% with gemcitabine and 10% with cyclophosphamide....

"The problem boiled down"—this is from Dr. Jake Thiessen—"to gaps in communication and its unintended consequences."

So what occurred? What happened throughout our province? Well, 1,202 people received underdosed chemotherapy. Peterborough Regional Health Centre had one patient; Lakeridge Health had 37; London Health Sciences Centre had 691; Windsor Regional Hospital had 290; and then another province, New Brunswick, had 183. Throughout this process, there were 40 pediatric patients affected by this error. For those fighting cancer, providing diluted medication is inexcusable and something we don't expect in our advanced Western health care system.

First of all, though, I do want to commend the front-line workers who notified of the error, worked through the error and got messages and information to the patients and ensured that they were brought in to their doctors to ensure they got re-evaluated. We can't say enough about our health care professionals in this province. They're not to blame for this problem. They're working hard every day, and when the error was detected they worked even harder to ensure that things were put in place. Dr. Thiessen even commended them, and I'll read from his committee Hansard report:

"In closing, as I've said in the report, I commend administrators, physicians, pharmacists, nurses and other personnel in the affected hospitals for their timely and innovative responses. Their actions clearly demonstrate that their primary concern was for patients. These professionals are a credit to our health care system."

I totally agree and applaud that remark from Dr. Thiessen.

In dealing with this problem once it arose, the government appointed Dr. Jake Thiessen to oversee the report, to do a review of the system and to report back to the Minister of Health. Dr. Thiessen, I think, was an amazing pick for this minister. I will give kudos to her again that she picked the right person for the job. Dr. Jake Thiessen is a PhD. He taught, I would bet, 40 years of pharmacists throughout this province. He taught me pharmacokinetics in fourth year. He's an excellent teacher. He also was instrumental in the start of the University of Waterloo's School of Pharmacy. The man has a background in pharmacy and in pharmacokinetics, which is basically how the drug is working inside your body. He's an expert; I totally agree with that choice.

Dr. Thiessen delivered his report this fall, and many stakeholders expressed satisfaction. I'll just read a few of the reports from stakeholders and what they said about Dr. Thiessen's report:

"As Dr. Thiessen's report points out, the entire health community needs to work together to ensure that no patients ever endure such an experience again. We are pleased that the report validated our past statements and testimony and we look forward to implementing the recommendations that relate to Marchese." That was from Marchese Health Solutions.

"The OHA and its members welcome Dr. Thiessen's report, and thank him for his thoughtfulness and effort...."

"We will carefully review each of Dr. Thiessen's 12 recommendations, and the government's proposed actions, as we collaborate in moving forward with measures to address this important patient safety matter. It is essential that all health system partners continue to work closely together to maintain confidence in Ontario's cancer drug system." That was the Ontario Hospital Association.

"London Health Sciences Centre welcomes this report, and we thank Dr. Thiessen for his thorough review, thoughtful analysis of the issue and his insightful recommendations."

"We believe that his recommendations will serve our patients well."

"London Health Sciences Centre will work closely with the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC), Ontario College of Pharmacists (OCP), group purchasing organizations, the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) and other affected hospitals to implement Dr. Thiessen's recommendations." That was from the London Health Sciences Centre.

"Thiessen, the founding director of the University of Waterloo's School of Pharmacy, has made a number of recommendations that would standardize drug labelling, lead to more standardized oversight of hospital pharmacies, and increase federal control of medication producers and suppliers." That's from Lakeridge Health.

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"Our government fully endorses Dr. Thiessen's recommendation and looks forward to working with Health Canada and our health sector partners to act on them. As part of our efforts we will introduce legislation in the fall to further enhance Ontario's cancer drug supply system. Patients and their families deserve to have utmost confidence that they are receiving the highest quality and most effective chemotherapy treatment available and we will work tirelessly to build on what we have already done to safeguard the system." That was from Minister Deb Matthews.

"Notwithstanding the underdosing incident, the continued use of group purchasing organizations (GPOs) to negotiate vendor product preparation pharmaceutical services shall not be discouraged. However, improvements are needed in the GPO-based processes." That is the first recommendation Dr. Thiessen brought forward in his report to the government, the fact that we should

not move away from GPOs. Basically, why are GPOs good? You'll hear some talk from the left saying that we need to get rid of all the group purchasing organizations. You can't simply say that the hospital is going to operate perfectly. As Dr. Thiessen has said in his own words, "I've been in enough places that I see what goes on. My own pharmacy where I go to has a bar code on it. My medications have bar codes on them, so I'm very satisfied with that. But I've been in hospitals, and I see that they just don't know. I've asked, even in the course of my investigation—I've said, 'So you make this stuff in-house now?' Just because you make it in-house doesn't give you any guarantees. It's a closed system; hospitals are closed systems. So you have to make sure that you're not blinded by things like this. But I said, 'Okay, so now you've made that. Tell me what's in there?' 'Well, it's this and this.' I say, 'Good. Do you know which lot number and which supplier it came from?' They couldn't tell me."

That's basically saying you cannot just say, "Get rid of the GPOs and this incident will never occur again." This leads tendency to the fact that there are other methods to ensure in place that work well with—having these group purchasing organizations to work even further.

The government can enhance this process with GPOs, and I think this is where they're missing the boat, which could come out further—there's no transparency, there's no accountability with these organizations that are using our taxpayer dollars to purchase equipment for our hospitals.

His second recommendation was, "Every GPO shall review its procurement process to ensure that risk for patients is considered an essential evaluation and adjudication criterion when considering proposals." I think that's an excellent idea. The GPOs could actually learn a thing or two from what's already out there in the system. You don't have to recreate the boat with this. The CCACs in our province continually do this over and over. They review their contract proposals. They've even gotten together as a group, the Ontario Association of CCACs, in which they, together, review how the contract should be going out. I don't know why the hospitals in this province didn't get together when they formed these purchasing organizations, why they didn't contact other Ministry of Health members like the CCACs and see how they do their best practices. I think this is another opportunity for the government to step in and oversee what's going on with these group purchasing organizations and see what else is going on at the Ministry of Health, and actually work to find what's working in our system and pass it along throughout the system.

His third point was, "Every GPO should adopt a standardized product and/or service specification description that outlines the requirements for contracted sterile and non-sterile pharmaceutical preparation services." That is an excellent idea here. This is where the system broke down. This is exactly where the system broke down, because there were gaps in the communications. Because of that, we had unintended consequences that we now have to deal with.

His point number 4: "Annually in January, each GPO shall publicize information regarding the contracted pharmaceutical services provided by all its vendors." This is good. It gives us information, as people outside of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—the fact that we can actually see what's going on with these organizations which are formed from our hospital corporations to see exactly who they're dealing with.

Number 5: "Marchese Hospital Solutions (MHS) shall review and revise its product preparation processes to ensure that all its products meet the specifications required by professionals in treating patients...." That's good basic business practice, to review what you're doing and how you can implement and how you can make it better. I'm sure Marchese will also be a partner with the Ontario College of Pharmacists as they work together to develop the new standards.

Number 6: "The Ontario College of Pharmacists ... shall work quickly with Health Canada to define best practices and contemporary objective standards for non-sterile and sterile product preparation within a licensed pharmacy."

USP 797 is the golden standard for anything that's made in a sterile room throughout the United States. It's something that should be here in Canada as a follow-through. You'll notice that most pharmacies or compounding medication facilities which do adhere to USP 797 are the ones that are delivering the service already. I think it's good to ensure that that becomes a standard in our province.

"The OCP ... shall stipulate specialized electronic material records and label requirements for non-sterile and sterile product preparation within a licensed pharmacy." Excellent idea. It has to do with traceability. We want to know what came from where and how we can track it back in a quick fashion.

"The OCP ... shall consider a special designation and licence for any licensed pharmacy engaged in large volume non-sterile and sterile product preparation. Such pharmacies shall be inspected annually." Again, as I said, that's hitting the gold standard that our pharmacies have to go through, and inspecting them yearly makes good sense.

"The OCP shall specify credentials beyond education and licensing for personnel engaged in non-sterile and sterile product preparation practices within a licensed pharmacy." This is an excellent idea, and the fact is that it was brought up many times in committee. How come these pharmacists and technicians making this product aren't specially trained in certain aspects of drug preparation? Oncology at this point, but there's also TPN therapy, pain management; there are so many classifications.

I, myself, was a diabetes educator. I went out and got that extra credentialing because I knew it would help my professionalism a little more. It helped me with my customers. It ensured that I was helping health care providers. I didn't renew it. I became an MPP, so I'm not officially a diabetes educator anymore. It's an exam

every five years, and my time now is spent working as an MPP and not a diabetes educator. But that shows the credentialing that's out there that pharmacists and health care professionals will attain to. But ensuring that the OCP has certain levels—again, the gold bar standardization that can occur in our profession—I think it will be embraced by our pharmacists in this community.

"Health Canada shall license all enterprises that function beyond the product preparation permitted within a licensed pharmacy; that is, all product preparation enterprises not within a licensed pharmacy shall be licensed." The good part about this is that this will take care of cross-border shipping of product. This will ensure that if one of our hospitals is receiving product from Nova Scotia or Quebec or wherever, that they meet a certain level in order to be sure that this doesn't occur from outside of our province.

The OHA "shall conduct a formal review/audit to determine the efficiency and traceability of computer-based clinic and hospital records for patients and their treatments, and report the findings to the MOHLTC." This could easily be fixed if we ever got eHealth off the board. I'm sure it could probably just be an add-on that we could probably get a couple of computer programmers to put together in rapid time. I'm sure there are many out there that could still beat the government in delivering an eHealth product if we let them start today.

"The OCP shall license all pharmacies operating within Ontario's clinics or hospitals." This is what this bill does. For the government to say that they've got the other 11 recommendations up and running and ready to roar, that's false. That can't be occurring. There's too much preparation and diligence that needs to be done far beyond these recommendations. So for them to come out and say, "After we get this bill passed, the system is all fixed." The system is not going to be fixed for a few years, because these 11 recommendations aren't going to happen overnight. They're not going to happen within six months. There's too much work that needs to go on, so their propaganda needs to stop, saying that they fixed the system with this one bill that's come up.

As I touched on before in my previous two minutes, the fact that GPOs aren't really in this legislation—they need to be. They need to be looked at. Later I'll discuss these aspects of them.

Let me talk about this bill. Reading through some of the different parts of this bill, this bill has no teeth in the discipline aspect of it: "A director of a corporation operating a hospital pharmacy is not liable for an offence by virtue of subsection (1), and may not be proceeded against under subsection (2)." The fact that this legislation—and I'll get to what's going to go on, but the fact is that there is no real person that is going to be held responsible for the operation of these hospital pharmacies. You can go after the corporation, but I'll get back further into the detail on that. Basically the fact is, there's a contact person with the Ontario College of Pharmacists, but that contact person isn't liable for anything going wrong in that system, the hospital as a whole is, and we'll get to that.

1730

I'll just sit down and explain that that contact person that I talked about is supposed to reflect what occurs in the community pharmacy, the designated manager. In a community pharmacy, there's a designated manager, and it's a pharmacist. It's not necessarily the owner of a pharmacy, but it's the pharmacist that the owner has designated to ensure that the laws are followed. There are standards for designated managers. I got this off the Ontario College of Pharmacists website, and it goes over the duties of a designated manager. This is why we have a safe pharmacy network system in Ontario. The college of pharmacy has done its job, it has done its due diligence, and it has ensured that there is a person accountable for the actions of that pharmacy, to ensure that our standards are met.

The designated manager in a pharmacy will ensure that the equipment is there; have the library requirements; ensure that storage of drugs is proper; and, if it's a lock-and-leave pharmacy, ensure that those conditions are met. Lock-and-leave pharmacies—if you go to a grocery store, you sometimes go in there and it's all locked up. Certain items can only be sold under the direct supervision of a pharmacist. When they are closed, they have to ensure that's locked up so those products aren't available to the public.

Record-keeping: This is vitally important, this stuff. They have to comply with the narcotic control regulations, the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the Food and Drug Act, benzodiazepines and targeted substances regulations, the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, the Ontario Drug Benefit Act, the Ontario college's standards of practices, and the Ontario college's policies, guidelines and bylaws. Just imagine what these people have to be accountable for.

Professional supervision of pharmacy: They've got to ensure that there's always a pharmacist on-site. They have to ensure that confidentiality is maintained with information. They have to notify the registrar, in writing, of the termination of employment of a member for reasons of professional misconduct, incompetency or incapacity. If there's a problem with a pharmacist, they just can't go and work somewhere else, because that designated manager has the standard that he has to contact the college and let them know what has gone wrong.

They have to have processes and procedures in place and ensure that inventory management is conducted. They have to account for all narcotic losses and controlled drug losses. They have to do a drug count every month, and if they're off in the numbers, they have to go and report that.

He has to sign an official statement saying that he accepts the responsibility of this position. He has to ensure that staff are properly trained and certified. That is why we have a strong pharmacy system in this province.

However, this bill states, on page 3, "Every hospital or institution in which a hospital pharmacy or an institution-

al pharmacy is operated shall designate a contact person for the hospital pharmacy"—a contact person. Well, that's nice to have a contact person. Then, later on, it talks about the director not being liable for an offence. I don't understand why they didn't go forward and put some accountability into this bill. Why did they walk away from putting in a little accountability, so that I know and my family members know, when they go to the pharmacy, that someone's job or career is on the line if they don't do their job correctly, because it affects the safety of my family? I don't want my family getting diluted medication. I don't want them to get the wrong drug. I don't want them, because they made some process that they thought would save money, to undermine my health care. I want to make sure that person knows that they are accountable for their actions.

You can talk about going forward and say, "You can hold the hospital accountable." I don't know. There are big organizations out there, and I just can't see why anybody would even try to hold the hospital accountable.

As I said, it doesn't mention the GPOs. Just so everybody knows, this bill, when implemented—if everything this bill wants to do is implemented, it would not have prevented the underdosing of the chemo drugs that occurred. This bill would not prevent what happened, and people need to understand that this isn't the fix. This bill would not have prevented that.

Now, I have to discuss here the question within this bill, the fact that if, however, the Ontario College of Pharmacists wants to put a charge against a hospital, the fact that they have to contact the Minister of Health first to let them know. Why? Why can't a regulator that we've set up, that's supposed to be independent, do its work? Why does the Ministry of Health have to be acknowledged? Unless, of course, it is to run damage control for the ministry before word gets out.

I'm just going to address this to my colleague Frank Klees, who spoke about Ornge. He read about this, and it's a letter from the Ombudsman. I'm going to take a little bit of it, but it's from Hansard, from Newmarket-Aurora MPP Frank Klees.

It talks about the independence of the watchdog: "Special investigators," under Bill 11, would enjoy authority similar to that of my office," which is the Ombudsman's, "when it investigates the more than 500 ministries, agencies, boards, commissions, tribunals and corporations that fall under our jurisdiction. But there is an important difference: The 'special investigators' would report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. They would not be independent of government. Far from being watchdogs, they would operate on a ministerial dog leash." That's from the words of the Ombudsman.

I feel that little statement in this legislation that says, however, now, if the college of pharmacy has a problem with a hospital because they're not following the standards of accreditation, they have to go to the ministry and let them know what's going on—I think that has taken a little bit of the bite out of the legislation and the accountability, again, that is lacking in this system.

I brought up Ornge very quickly here.

Interjection: You can take your time.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I can take my time. It's the first hour I've spoken. I'll just take a little commercial break here. The most I've ever spoken before was probably 20 minutes, so—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Take a 20-minute break.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Take a 20-minute break. Take a little water break. It's good for the soul.

I'm just going to talk a little bit about the GPOs, that they're not addressed in this bill. It's frightening, because it does speak to the larger issue of procurement of public goods and services from the private sector.

It's understandable that the general public looks cynically upon the arrangements between the public and private sector. However, before we condemn these arrangements, Dr. Thiessen, as I said before, has discussed that outsourcing of the preparation of medication and chemo drugs does have a role: "It is noteworthy"—this is Dr. Thiessen—"that this stage of dissolving the drug powder in the vials may consume"—could save a lot of time. "This is an important reason why outsourcing through vendors is used by the hospitals. In a busy oncology service where many doses are prepared daily for patients, waiting for a drug to dissolve is a substantial inconvenience."

He acknowledges that the best way to ensure a steady supply of the drugs necessary in an oncology department is to outsource their preparation. It saves a lot of time. It also enhances the safety aspect—the fact that the hospital technicians and assistants are doing multi-tasks. They're not always working in the oncology department; they rotate around, or they rotate doing different tasks. If it's prepared from a company whose sole purpose is to deliver that medication daily or weekly, or however long the expiry date was on the product, those technicians and pharmacists and assistants maintain their competence in preparing this medication because they're doing it more repetitively. There's nothing wrong with relying on the private sector to deliver goods that our public sector needs. The private sector can often do it more efficiently and timely.

The real problem lies with this government's execution of these public-private arrangements. In particular, the Ministry of Health, under the leadership of this Liberal government, has made blunder after blunder. Their mismanagement follows a pattern: Pick a service to outsource, neglect to establish a proper oversight apparatus, and then react to an inevitable crisis or scandal with a bill that addresses a part of the overall problem, while dodging the calls for the minister's resignation.

Again, I'll just quote Dr. Thiessen from Hansard, here in the committee: "Yes, absolutely. I saw the role that they play"—this is GPOs—"and the advantages that accrue from that—advantages, obviously, from the point of view of the institutions. They see this as an important thing. I can certainly imagine an even expanded role for GPOs for the future. The idea of some kind of an infrastructure—perhaps government infrastructure, even national infrastructure—which would lead to some oversight of GPOs is something that is worth considering."

1740

This bill does nothing about setting up some sort of infrastructure to watch over these GPOs. In fact, Minister—Mister—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Madam Speaker.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: In another year you'll be a minister, Speaker.

What we found funny in committee was the fact that we couldn't follow where the money flows. That's something of great consideration that I hope the government, the Ministry of Health, has taken a look at. These GPOs save millions and millions of dollars in rebates back to the GPO. However, we couldn't trace where the money goes after that. Where do the millions of dollars—and I'm not saying something bad is happening with them. They're probably being used for patient care. However, money is getting tight, and if they're saving this money that is used to enhance our health care services, then that other money we have that they're saving could be used in other areas of our system—maybe balance our books. However, we haven't been able to follow the money flow from the rebates, which the government banned in community pharmacies years ago. However, they're allowing the rebates to occur, which—who knows where the money went. Where did it go?

When you start thinking about the government allowing these ventures to start up without the money to flow, it brings parallels to Ornge. My goodness, it brings to mind the Ornge fiasco. The government has made every effort to ensure that we forget Ornge. However, if these blunders continue to recur, or if this lack of oversight, lack of transparency, lack of accountability continues—it reminds us all too much of Ornge. I'll give you a quick synopsis of what happened to Ornge and how that relates to what occurred.

In 2005-06, Ontario Air Ambulance changed its name to Ornge. It was done on the recommendation of the Auditor General and constituted a public-private arrangement. It's a fateful performance agreement that allowed Ornge to structure itself privately, and it was signed off on.

In 2011, a number of questionable financial dealings and a myriad of for-profit companies formed under the umbrella began to raise questions about Ornge. For an organization that receives \$150 million a year from taxpayers' dollars, it's clear the government did not do its job in overseeing Ornge.

In January 2012, the minister cleared the house, fired Mazza and replaced the board with a group of people who have no idea what aviation does or why they're even in it. Problems at Ornge become apparent as the OPP launches a criminal investigation dealing with Ornge.

On February 17, 2012, headlines appear in the Huffington Post: "Ontario Ornge Air Ambulance Service on a Tighter Leash." Why didn't the government put Ornge on a tighter leash to start with? It was, again, a reaction. They weren't proactive on this thing; they waited for a problem to occur.

In 2012, a committee is established to get to the bottom of Ornge. We wanted a select committee of the government. Even after a motion of this House where the minority opposition—both parties—voted for a select committee, the government ignored this.

Fifty-seven witnesses would be heard from. It was apparent that Ornge was dysfunctional and lacked the professional aviation expertise to fulfill its mandate.

March 2012: The Liberals introduce Bill 50 to address Ornge; of course, that dies with prorogation, when the Liberals scatter and go home. They come back to a new Premier and the same Minister of Health, who has now got a promotion to Deputy Premier, and come up with Bill 11.

They tried to scramble through a loophole in salary disclosure. Dr. Mazza's \$1.4-million annual salary was nowhere on the sunshine list. Just as this was not proactively addressed, the lack of oversight on companies preparing sterile and non-sterile drug compounds was not addressed.

The former Premier said he didn't see a 2004 memo from a government lawyer raising issues with the Ornge agreement. This shows that even when this government is alerted to potential problems, there's no guarantee they'll actually do anything about them. Only when a scandal or crisis arises do they take action.

Bill 11 is introduced and unfortunately does not take into any consideration the informative debate on this side of the House, which could have made the bill a lot better. They ignore everything. It's a clear example of the little thought this government puts into oversight when it comes to private procurement of public goods or services.

I want to reference again my colleague from Newmarket-Aurora, Frank Klees, as he said when he closed debate for Bill 11: "I believe that the divesting of delivery of health care services can in fact be done, and it can be done efficiently and responsibly through a non-governmental organization, but what has to be in place is proper oversight, accountability, transparency. Who is responsible at the end of the day to ensure that, whatever arrangement is agreed to, whatever the document is under which those services are performed, that service provider is held accountable? It is the government of the day, and the government of the day cannot paper over its lack of responsibility and its failures."

Speaker, this bill in front of us, and the 11 recommendations, do not take into account the fact that our GPOs need some infrastructure or regulation. Again, Dr. Thiessen has mentioned that in his comments in committee—

Ms. Laurie Scott: Tell them what "GPOs" means—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: GPOs? Group purchasing organizations.

Ms. Laurie Scott: A refresh for those at home.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I just thought you might want to know. I'm sure the minister knows all that.

Now let's—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're showing baby pictures.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Baby pictures over there. We don't have time for baby pictures. We have time for debate.

If we go further into the scandals that have gone on in this government, we look at eHealth. While not a private company, eHealth oversaw work among a number of private consultants and works heavily with the private sector. Again, while not a private company, eHealth demonstrates that whether public or private, this government abdicates its responsibility for proper oversight. This is how situations like eHealth, Ornge and this chemo underdosage can continue to happen. The Ministry of Health, under this government, continues to operate reactively as opposed to proactively.

In 2008, eHealth was set up to provide Ontarians with electronic health records by 2015. Sarah Kramer was appointed as CEO in charge of ensuring eHealth met deadlines and came in on budget.

In May 2009, details began to emerge about lucrative contracts awarded by eHealth without competitive tenders, and nickel-and-dime spending on snacks by consultants, some of whom charged thousands of dollars for their services—that sounds a lot like the Pan Am Games, now that I come to think about it; a lot of similarities going on there. They didn't learn their lesson from eHealth, and now Pan Am occurs. I don't know.

In June 2009, Sarah Kramer has to resign for her role in the spending scandal, and in 2009 it was revealed that eHealth had spent in excess of \$1 billion, with nothing to show for it—a billion dollars.

I mean, that Adscam that occurred in the federal government, with the Liberal government there, is peanuts compared to what occurred with this one scandal. We're not even talking about the \$1.1 billion wasted on the gas plant scandal.

The ministry, under this government, has an abysmal record, Speaker, when it comes to transparency and accountability. We need a government that puts in place the tools of accountability at the beginning of these arrangements. This government cannot continue to be reactive. The province cannot afford this government to be just reactive. We need some proactive solutions and thought and processes in this government. This government can't do it. They've failed and are unable to do.

This government has left the GPOs out. Again, as I mentioned earlier, this bill itself would not have prevented this tragedy, the dilution of chemotherapy products, from occurring in this province.

The Minister of Health mentioned earlier that Ontarians deserve and need nothing but the best. I agree with that statement. I think anybody in this House will agree with that statement. Ontarians deserve and need nothing but the best. But this minister and this government have shown that they aren't delivering the best. They're not even close to delivering the best. They're producing failure after scandal after failure after scandal. It's unfortunate that the people who are suffering are the people, the Ontarians, who deserve the best.

They talk about the improved wait times that are occurring out in the system. As I said earlier, I've got a

patient with a back problem who can't see a specialist. I've got people with their hip and knee—they can't get replacements—suffering, waiting for treatment.

I've got an area of Elgin—Middlesex—London which has a doctor shortage and has for a long time. It can't attract doctors. I have to go to the walk-in clinic. Those who need pain medication can't get it delivered to them at the walk-in clinic, because that's the policy, to prevent the abusers.

This is a government that continually says they're delivering the best. Well, they're not delivering the best, particularly in Elgin county where West Elgin has been short of a doctor for over a year and Dutton/Dunwich is even longer—over a year.

1750

For this government to come forward with this bill that says they've fixed this problem—they're coating over this problem. This problem is still going to be in existence. The 12 recommendations are going to take a long, long time to figure out, and the fact that it's not going to occur—so delivery of the best is not occurring. I bet you could probably go throughout this province—there are lots of members here from northern Ontario. Do you agree that Ontarians are getting the best from this government? It's a rhetorical question, I'm pretty sure.

I sat in committee to debate, look at, learn and educate ourselves on what has occurred in this chemo drug underdosing over the few years—and the fact that there are a lot of problems in our health care system that have come up abruptly from it. One of the regulations—the fact that we need to regulate our GPOs is being totally ignored at this point. GPOs, group purchasing organizations—I've been given notes here. Maybe I should explain what they are.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Too technical. You're talking like a pharmacist.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm too technical?

Ms. Laurie Scott: He's talking like a pharmacist.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: GPOs: Basically, for each hospital to individually go out and purchase what they need—they don't constitute enough volume to get good prices, so what hospitals will do is, they'll form a group that will go out and purchase for them, but it'll take into account all the hospitals' volume, which would of course cut down on rates. The GPO is a separate body, a public, non-profit company that, in acquiring the lower rates for the volume—at the same time, they will receive rebates for going after the business. As I said earlier, where that money is and how it's accounted for, I don't know.

In closing, Madam Speaker, Ontarians deserve the best and need nothing but the best. This government does not deliver the best, and we need better than what they are doing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was quite interesting to listen to the member from the very hard riding of—

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Elgin—Middlesex—London.

M^{me} France Gélinas: —Elgin—Middlesex—London; I will get it—describe what had happened. Basically, this description is worth remembering because, as time goes on and as more recommendations regarding what happened are made public, it's important to realize the chronology of events that brought us there. He spent quite a bit of time, partly based on what Dr. Thiessen has shared with us and partly based on the information that he himself had received while sitting on the social policy committee, like I did and like many members on all sides of the House did—that's why I find it a little bit surprising that we did not have the courtesy to wait until the report from social policy and our recommendations are made public.

What is in the bill is good. I have no problem with most of what is in the bill, but I see more of an opportunity lost because some of the recommendations that the committee envisaged may need legislative change. Why not bundle them all together?

What has happened with the diluted chemo drugs, everybody will remember that for a long time. It shook the confidence of our health care system to the core. You are taking those drugs that have horrific side effects because you want to get better, and then you find out that this has happened. It would have been prudent to wait until the committee has made their recommendations, but this is not the case.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, I listened intently to the member from Elgin—Middlesex—London. It was a little hard to follow, a kind of rambling address, but one of the criticisms appears to be that somehow as a government we are not following up on Dr. Thiessen's recommendations, and this is absolutely incorrect. If one looks closely and carefully at Dr. Thiessen's 12 recommendations, the one that required immediate legislative change was his recommendation number 12, this provision that the Ontario College of Pharmacists license all pharmacies operating within Ontario's hospitals. That is what we are here to debate today. This is something that we, as a government, extremely expeditiously put in place.

The member for Nickel Belt, in her remarks, has commented that perhaps we should wait for the full report of the social policy committee. I know that our deliberations will produce some interesting recommendations. As a member of that committee, I'm certainly very pleased to participate in that process. We have looked very carefully at a number of different issues, including group purchasing organizations. But at this point in time, it's clearly important for us to cover a regulatory grey area where, in fact, we were not looking at the functioning of hospital pharmacies to the extent that we should have been doing through the Ontario College of Pharmacists. That's what this bill is all about. The rest of the recommendations are essentially directed to either the federal government or to other jurisdictions for further action at this point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always a distinct pleasure. I was watching the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London on the television. As a pharmacist and a member of the Tim Hudak team, I would say he has a thorough understanding of what he spoke. When you look at the intent of the bill and the reaction to an omission made—in this case, on the dosage of the chemotherapy drugs—he raises very good points about quality and reliability to a government that you can't really depend on in many instances, more specifically in health.

I spoke today to the Minister of Health. At a personal level, I think she's trying to do the best she can, but there are things that are being overlooked in that ministry broadly, and this is just one glowing example.

The remarks made by the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London are very true to the point: that this bill—and the discussion in committee that he participated in for the whole length of time, and if he's making recommendations I would hope you would want to improve the bill.

And the parliamentary assistant, I know, is a physician, and she should listen carefully and not be critical of trying to improve a bill where human health is involved.

I think all members of the House want the system of health care to work. This government is quickly trying to sweep this thing away as if it never happened. If there are due recommendations being made by members who have listened and worked on the committee, out of respect, you should listen to them. Whether it's the member from Sudbury as well—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Nickel Belt.

Mr. John O'Toole: —or Nickel Belt, rather—there are convincing arguments in her case as well.

I'd encourage the parliamentary assistant to listen, respond and make amendments to a bill that is trying to solve an error that was made that could have cost lives.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad that I'm standing up today to put my comments on this bill because my riding was directly affected. In the London–Fanshawe area, it was London Health Sciences Centre that had many patients—in London, we had over 900 people who

were affected by the underdosing. I can tell you I had many calls from constituents, and certain ones that were particularly affected by the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs. It was very heart-wrenching to hear their stories, and it really shakes the foundation of health care, for myself and for the patients who were involved and their families, of how this could happen. There's really no excuse for anything like this to ever occur in a health care system. If we can't count on our health care system to come to our need when we're at our most dire moment in our own health, then it's a really sad state.

I'm glad this bill is being put forward. Yes, we certainly need to have a review of oversight, what happened. Dr. Jake Thiessen did a report. But if there's more work to be done on this bill—and our health critic has said that we need to make sure these things are done correctly and that the government listens to the critics. If they'd listened to us in other areas, like Ornge, when we first brought it up—Howard Hampton, I think, raised that flag—maybe things could have been prevented before they got to this situation where people's lives were at stake.

I'm asking this government to please listen to this side of the House when we're giving you solutions and constructive criticism to make sure our health care is there when we need it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to thank the members for Nickel Belt and London–Fanshawe for your comments—they're greatly appreciated—and the member for Durham for his excellent comments.

I thank the member for Oak Ridges–Markham for her comments; however, the arrogance she shows in her response is typical of the arrogance that this government has shown to the people of Ontario, which is why we continually run into scandal after scandal. You guys have got to start listening to the opposition; you've got to start listening to the people of Ontario in order that we prevent your government from killing people.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It is now 6 of the clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1801.

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Second Session, 40th Parliament

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de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

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Wednesday 23 October 2013

Mercredi 23 octobre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 23 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 23 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE LE CODE DE LA ROUTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 16, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 34, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of permit denials and out-of-province service and evidence in certain proceedings and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act /
Projet de loi 34, Loi visant à modifier le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les refus relatifs aux certificats d'immatriculation et la signification et les preuves extra-provinciales dans certaines instances, et à apporter une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the minister for bringing this important bill forward, to start my comments. I think it's a very important bill. I think it's going to help municipalities to collect those much-needed fines and revenue.

But I want to start off by discussing an issue that comes up again and again every day in this House: the issue of downloading services to municipalities. That happened in the late 1990s and the early 2000s. It seems that so often in this House we are actually debating issues that boil down to one thing: the inability of municipalities to continue to address issues with their limited resources due to downloading that happened quite a few years ago.

Just yesterday, I rose in this House to discuss Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, which is a situation where municipalities are struggling to deal with the level of waste and waste management in their particular areas.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A little order, please.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

Before this current government, the Ontario Conservative government made it their prerogative to download

provincial responsibilities to municipalities. It might have reduced the province's expenses in the short term, but, as we see, municipalities simply are not capable of handling many of these services that have been placed upon them because of the lack of financial resources. They certainly try, and they make every effort. But, as the years have passed, the issues keep building, until we are once again forced to deal with these issues at a provincial level. So it speaks to the importance of long-term planning in politics when we make decisions here in this House. When we pass legislation, we need to be thinking about the long-term effects of those decisions.

An obvious situation is the gas plant scandal. When the Liberal government made the decision to scrap those gas plants, when they could have waited out the contract, they weren't thinking of what the future would be for Ontario when they made that decision. Now we see that Ontario will be paying for increased hydro rates for the next 25 years or more.

So when it comes to Bill 34, it's important to note that this bill is trying to solve issues at a municipal level. The bill does add a level of provincial support to incent fine evaders to pay, but it doesn't go far enough in providing support by the province. The bill is the first step in streamlining the process and giving municipalities more clarity; however, it does not resolve all of the collection issues. While municipalities are responsible for fine collection, there is a gap between responsibility for collection, available information and the authority that municipalities have in reality.

The report stipulates that even in the case of Ontario drivers, ministries don't share information, which makes fine collection very difficult. Ninety-one per cent of those infractions come from Ontario drivers, the rest from out of province, but our systems aren't connected with each other, so how does the province intend to rectify this situation about information sharing? Clearly, there is a serious lack of coordination within the government, which acts as a barrier to progress on this issue.

The Ontario NDP supports the idea behind this bill. We need to be collecting those unpaid fines not only for the purpose of increasing government revenue but to provide an incentive for drivers to avoid continuing to violate traffic laws, to make our roads safer and, hopefully, to save lives.

The truth is, this is a billion-dollar problem and it's only going to get bigger if we do not do something about it. Unpaid POA fines are growing and are a problem that needs to be addressed. Unpaid POA fines undermine public safety, the rule of law and accountability. They

also have a huge impact on municipalities and their finances.

Municipalities, courts, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders have been advocating for decisions on this for years. On November 9, the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards released a report, and I quote Alok Mukherjee, president of the police services board: "Every unpaid fine undermines the justice system, frustrates our law enforcement officers, and denies local governments much-needed revenue in challenging economic times. Working with stakeholders we have developed sensible recommendations to tackle this billion-dollar problem. Action is long overdue and we look forward to working collaboratively with the government to stop this pattern of unpaid fines."

Before I speak to this bill—what it does, its limitations and some recommendations—I will provide a brief background on the situation.

POA offences are non-criminal offences that are normally punishable with an out-of-court fine. Charges are laid by the police, and typically a person has 15 days to either pay a fine or arrange a court date. If the person does nothing, the matter goes before a JP, and if the person is convicted in absentia they are mailed written notice that the fine must be paid within 30 days. If the fine remains unpaid, governments have some tools at their disposal to compel payment, including referring the matter to a collection agency, adding the fine amount to a property tax bill or, in some limited instances, suspending plates or drivers' licences. These POA offences include speeding, careless driving, not wearing a seat belt—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Folks, I can't even hear the speaker. There have got to be at least seven sidebars going on. You know the rule: If you want to have a little discussion, take it outside. I'd like to hear what she has to say. Thank you.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

While these fines fall into many categories, this bill is dealing only with those that fall under the Highway Traffic Act. POA fines under the HTA accounted for 33% of all the POA fines and amounted to over \$300 million in 2010.

The problem of unpaid fines is growing and has been growing for decades, and one third of the fines across the province are not collected. Of course, this is different for each municipality. Toronto collects half; Dundas-Glen-garry only collects one third. Currently, whatever money is collected, after a portion is paid to the province, stays in that municipality. The estimated amount owed to municipalities is in excess of \$1 billion. It's a lot of money that's been pending for years, and there are a lot of new infractions and tickets each year.

There are several reasons for this continued growth in unpaid fines. The legal and social landscape in Ontario and Canada is very different today than it was when the POA came into effect. The need to efficiently address infractions has led to an increased reliance on fines rather than going to court and facing other penalties.

0910

When municipalities were downloaded and took over the fine-collection responsibilities, they were not appropriately resourced to assume these functions, and this resulted in very long delays in the courts and insufficient defaulter information, which means they didn't really have the current addresses or phone numbers of the people who were in default.

Another reason for the continued growth in fines is a shortage of JPs to preside over the POA courts. This delayed cases moving through the system, which increased the amount of cases in the system and the low rate of collection. Some stakeholders suggest that it can take over six months to resolve a case in court, and as time passes, the possibility of the cases becoming uncollectable increases.

Because POA courts pay the same filing and issuing costs as the general public, their limited resources force them to abandon the pursuit of many cases, which means they do not get paid. The inability to afford enforcement and collection of fines adds to the amount of money in unpaid fines, and clearly there need to be more supports in place when it comes to fine collections.

Another reason for growth in unpaid fines is the amount of fines that are being given out. Between 1999 and 2007, municipalities and municipal police gave out 57% more fines while the OPP gave out 20% more POA fines. Since processing resources have not increased over time, the backlogs just continue to grow.

When it comes to unpaid fines, it isn't just the number of unpaid fines that is increasing but the monetary amount. In 2010, the cost of many road fines had doubled or more.

With these higher fines, it has been noted that it can also impact unpaid fines, as individuals find it more difficult to afford the fines at all. While we can hope, by increasing fines and instituting higher penalties, that individuals will be incented to clear their name and pay the fines, it has the opposite effect in some cases. Repeat offenders will simply resist payment in order to avoid interaction with authorities. Municipalities have also complained about a lack of tools available to them that are available to others.

It is true that Highway 407 collection has the ability to take a picture and then access the Ministry of Transportation database to issue the fine directly to the driver's house. Municipalities don't have the same level of access. What is that about? Municipalities are our partners and they don't have access, but a billion-dollar corporation has access to our MTO database. This speaks to a disconnect between municipalities and the province when it comes to addressing the issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I see you have two visitors over there.

Ms. Cindy Forster: While Bill 34 does take steps to increase the level of co-operation between municipalities and the province, it doesn't go far enough. If private companies are able to use the province as a resource, the same level of access should be available to municipalities.

If passed, this legislation will deny licence plates to drivers who have unpaid fines for offences such as speeding, improper lane changes, illegal turns, driving without insurance, and careless driving. This can be seen as an effective way to incent offenders to pay their outstanding fines, but shouldn't we consider things like ability to pay and transit opportunities available? Considering the current economic climate, it might be unwise to inflict more financial restrictions on Ontarians.

When discussing this issue, it's important to mention AMO's role in advocating for change. AMO, a non-profit organization representing 444 municipal governments across this province, made addressing POAs one of its top 12 asks in the 2011 provincial election.

AMO welcomes Bill 34. "Municipalities have long pressed for these powers, which will help recoup millions of dollars for municipalities and, more importantly, will ensure that individuals are held responsible for their actions and that justice is served," said Russ Powers, AMO president."

They are worried at the present time that "the administrative changes necessary to support this legislation may take two years to complete. AMO urges the government to complete these changes as quickly as possible so that municipalities will be able to collect the fines owing."

The 2012 provincial budget mentioned some key commitments to improve the collection of unpaid fines. This included two new tools: vehicle licence plate denial, and offsetting unpaid fines against federal income tax refunds. As a result of this commitment, the Ministry of Transportation established yet another committee to explore this issue in greater detail. This committee of multiple ministries and municipal reps developed a solid plan to deliver improvements, but Bill 34 is only one small step that needs to be addressed.

POA fines are severely impacting Ontario's municipalities. Leeds and Grenville has lost somewhere in the range of \$6 million to \$7 million in revenue from uncollected POA fines accumulated over the past 10 to 15 years. Sault Ste. Marie has lost \$12 million.

In 2001, the fines under the POA that the province hadn't yet collected when they downloaded fine collection to municipalities were downloaded as arrears. So the province couldn't even collect their fines, but they downloaded that responsibility under the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland—

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'm sorry.

Mr. Mike Colle: I tried to help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you, to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence.

Now we have—a certain individual walked in here and said, "It's so quiet in here." Well, it isn't now. And the other two visitors: a little loud; you might want to go back to your fort, okay? Thank you.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Aren't we trying to all be friends here, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thanks very much.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker.

In 2001, the fines under the POA that the province hadn't yet collected when they downloaded fine collection to municipalities—they also downloaded arrears at the same time. The province couldn't collect the fines, so they downloaded those to the municipalities without the appropriate resources.

Toronto courts are owed almost \$36 million in outstanding fines. To put this in perspective, this is the projected shortfall for the Toronto Transit Commission in 2012. Stormont-Dundas-Glenarry is owed the most in unpaid fines: over \$7 million, with less than one third being collected.

Collection is often seen as being about money rather than justice. Therefore, it's not considered essential to the justice system and not given the attention or resources that it actually needs to be really effective.

There has been some progress in addressing the problem of unpaid fines. Collection tools, including plate suspensions, licence suspensions, use of collection agencies, ability to add it to the property tax roll and repeal of statutory limitation periods, have varying success. Licence plate denial has been a very effective tool to compel the payment of certain fines and obligations, but it's currently used in very limited circumstances.

When the Ontario government transferred the enforcement of provincial offences to municipalities, it allowed them to hire collection agencies to pursue fines and fees. Collection agencies compete for those contracts, incenting them to perform better and collect more. This apparently is a cost-effective collection tool for municipalities, although I don't know how well the employees were actually paid.

In June 2010, amendments to the Ontario Municipal Act came into force, allowing municipalities to collect unpaid POA fines by adding them to the offender's property tax bill as arrears. I think this is an incentive, because most municipalities charge about 15% a year interest on unpaid taxes.

The city of Brampton identified 38 unpaid fines, totaling \$210,000. They sent letters to violators indicating that the amounts would be added to their tax bills. In less than a year, 25% of that has been collected.

The problem is that, to add it to the tax roll, whoever has actually created the violation of the law has to be the sole owner of the property. The fact is that there are many renters of the property, so it doesn't capture a huge amount of people.

There's a lack of coordination. There's a need for the ministries to get together and acknowledge their role in unpaid POA fines. According to the police services boards of Ontario, this is the single largest barrier to progress on the issue. For instance, the Ministry of Transportation and the Attorney General do not view the issue in the same way, according to the police services boards. When the POA system came into place, the idea was to take the burden off the administration of justice and

replace some offences with financial penalties. However, it seems that the Attorney General's primary concern is with administrative justice, as it should be, so where there is a disconnect between primary goals, there is also a disconnect between co-operation.

0920

Many individuals cannot be found and fines cannot be easily collected because their information is spread across fragmented databases. Because of this problem, stakeholders are calling for an integrated system that will streamline the collection system and make it easier to collect these fines. The police services board of Ontario has recommended in a white paper that the Ministry of Transportation's driver's licence, licence plate and Ministry of Attorney General databases be linked so offenders can be found and fines can be collected more easily. There are other ways of collecting fines: by hiring a collections clerk who reminds people of their overdue POA fines, such as in North Bay, where they have used this and have been successful.

There's also a need for operational changes to better align the authorities of the municipalities with their responsibilities, which they don't have currently. The province and municipalities need to work together to ensure that appropriate tools are in place to improve the ability to collect unpaid fines.

Now, there is a lack of incentive to pay. Many Ontarians have figured out which fines they have to pay and which fines they can avoid paying without penalty. Stakeholders have ideas on how this can be fixed, including discounts for early fine payment, doubling of late penalties and that offenders be required to pay fines in chronological order, so that if you have five or six fines outstanding, your payment goes to the first fine first. That way, they can't get out of paying the serious fines.

There's also a lack of available data on POA fines. Simply put, there's not enough data available to help guide public policymakers in figuring out how to address unpaid fines. The police services board of Ontario recommends that the Attorney General improve the quality and the accessibility of POA fines data analysis. This will lead to more collaboration between government and stakeholders.

There's a need for greater stakeholder engagement. Regular forums between the appropriate ministries and stakeholders to discuss best practices and identifying issues would go a long way to addressing the need for change and the range of solutions available.

I think it's becoming clear that Bill 34 is only a very small step toward resolving the POA fine issue.

After listening to what needs to be done, here's what the bill does: It amends the POA to allow the province to not validate or issue permits to convicted persons for traffic violations until a fine is paid. It outlines the infractions. It adds a section to the act that outlines documents for out-of-province drivers, a document certified by the provincial offences officers as having been obtained from any government to keep records of vehicle permits. It stipulates the process of issuing tickets, in-

cluding the officer's signature on the certificate; it also provides a copy of the driver's permit. It's pretty clear that much more needs to be done if we expect the system to work and these unpaid fines to be reined in.

As a member of the Ontario NDP, we will be supporting this bill but we look forward to the committee process, where amendments can be made.

Now, as I speak to this bill, I'd like to take an opportunity to comment on the remarks by the Minister of Transportation and the member from Newmarket-Aurora. I would be remiss if I didn't mention some of the issues I had with regard to their comments during their lead.

The Minister of Transportation spoke about the north and the fact that he's done a lot of driving in Thunder Bay, Hearst, Kenora or Dryden in a blizzard or storm and the challenges in doing this. And then he went on to congratulate the government for their leadership on the safest roads in North America. But I would say that our members in the north—Timmins-James Bay, Timiskaming-Cochrane, Kenora-Rainy River, Nickel Belt and Algoma-Manitoulin—would not agree that the highways in the north of this province are the safest in North America. In fact, they've been asking questions for the past several years about the snowplow operations and the reduced standards on all the roads during the winter driving months, regardless of the classification of those roads.

The government chose to contract out those services, and we've got contractors being supervised by another contractor as opposed to by ministry staff. The road conditions have been abysmal, and the circuits that were set up to clean the roads leave the snowplow operators running as much as 100 kilometres to 150 kilometres on one side before a return is done.

It has impacted the safety of drivers and their loved ones in the north. They are now driving on the wrong side of the road because it takes the operator 10 hours to clean the second side of the road, and there have been fatalities and serious injuries due to this reduced level of service in areas of this province where weather conditions can change dramatically on these long stretches of road.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: They've had five fatalities.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Five fatalities. Just this past winter I am sure this question was asked of the Minister of Transportation by at least three NDP members of this caucus.

Additionally, the snowplowing operations contract did not extend long enough into the spring to ensure continued safety of roads in areas where winter ends four to six weeks after southern Ontario and starts four weeks sooner than southern Ontario. In fact, my friends from Nickel Belt and Timmins-James Bay told me that they had snow last weekend and it has been snowing Monday and Tuesday up in areas of the north. So I wonder if the minister has that new, improved standards contract for snow removal in place right now—right now—to ensure the safety of our northern residents. Perhaps some of this new fine-collection money can be used from the pro-

vincial share to beef up winter contracts across this province in the north and in the southwest.

Our member for Windsor-Tecumseh has asked a number of questions in the House since he was elected in the summer about the installation of deficient girders on the Herb Gray Parkway project. This too is a road safety issue that's not going away. It may not have immediate impact on the drivers or their families in Windsor, or those travelling through the Windsor area, but somewhere down the road this will become a significant safety and economic issue for this province.

We—and I mean the NDP caucus—are waiting to hear from the Minister of Transportation on this issue as to whether they are going to order removal of the deficient girders already installed and what the go-forward plan is to ensure that we're getting value for the contract that was signed and that the deficiencies are corrected so we are using taxpayers' dollars in the most cost-effective and quality-effective ways, because there's no point in trying to collect millions of dollars of fines if we're just going to throw it away on deficient contracts and buyouts to contractors for cancelled gas plants and cancelled nuclear projects.

Centralization of programs and services, like Service-Ontario, POA courts and the court system in general, has become quite a problem for municipalities and for residents of those municipalities outside of the GTA, because there are municipalities outside of the GTA where transportation systems are ineffective or nonexistent to get people to these services to either pay a fine, get a renewal for a driver's licence or update your plate sticker.

You think government is actually there to ensure that these services are available and that they're accessible, but it becomes increasingly difficult as this government tries to balance its budget by cutting services. In Niagara, for example, there's no longer a Via Rail service or GO trains, and GO buses only travel to St. Catharines; there are no GO trains to St. Catharines. In Niagara Falls, there are only GO trains in the summer, to get the tourists there.

Mr. Rob Leone: There it is.

Ms. Cindy Forster: There it is.

It takes people from Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Welland—which are in Niagara as well—up to 50 minutes to drive, if they have access to a car, and they may not, once their plate is withheld. Although there's a regional bus service in its third-year trial, there are no direct routes. It could take one and a half to two hours for someone to get from Fort Erie to Niagara Falls, which is the only way then to get to St. Catharines, to access transportation to a GO bus out of the region or to get to the POA court in St. Catharines to either have their day in court or pay a fine.

Now, you'll hear that you can pay online, but many people don't use that system. I think I read something about how the government House leader didn't even know that the system was available, so I don't know that we're doing a great job of communicating our online services. There are many people who don't have a

computer, don't have access to one and don't have transportation to get to the library to actually go online and do that.

So if the government wants to increase penalties and fines for offenders, they must consider ability to pay and ability to travel before they consider leaving residents to the failing public transit system in Ontario.

We heard from the member from Oakville as well, during the government lead, that between 1970 and 2000, the outstanding fines were significantly less than what we're experiencing from 2000 to now, and he couldn't quite seem to understand why that might be.

0930

I think you have to look at the fact that many people don't have jobs. We are in precarious employment situations, minimum-wage jobs, part-time work. So you make a decision: Do I eat? Do I pay my rent? Or do I pay a fine? What options are available to me when I'm living on a minimum wage, or when I'm living below the poverty level?

It was over the last 10 to 12 years that Ontario lost hundreds of thousands of good-paying manufacturing jobs across this province. Many of these workers have ended up in jobs paying 50% or less of what they were earning, if they have obtained employment at all.

I have friends, Speaker, who are office workers, bank employees, nurses, teachers, and are married to former manufacturing workers, who are and have been the sole breadwinners for many years since those manufacturing jobs have disappeared. So is it any wonder that people may not be able to find the money to pay outstanding fines and choose, instead, to try and struggle through another week or another month? Is it right that people don't pay their fines? No, it isn't. But there are many reasons why they don't.

Part of this legislation is about punishing bad drivers, or at least making sure they understand the consequences of their infractions with fines or denial of plate renewal. This is a good thing, and hopefully it will reduce the number of infractions, make our roads safe for other drivers, pedestrians and communities in general.

That is why the NDP and, in particular, our justice critic, the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, have been tirelessly advocating for reduced auto insurance rates for good drivers. We believe there should be an immediate 15% average decrease achieved through savings that insurance companies enjoyed when the Liberal government allowed them to reduce accident benefits two years ago, resulting in several billions of dollars in profits to insurance companies. So in a way, we want to ensure that bad drivers understand there are consequences for the infractions and for not paying fines. Good drivers also want to reap rewards for safe driving records.

Unfortunately, we've heard from many drivers since the spring budget who have told us their rates are going up, some by 30% or more, and not down, as promised by the government in the spring budget. Perhaps if Ontarians weren't paying so much in auto insurance, they could actually afford to pay their POA fines.

Now, the member from Durham—I'm sorry he's not with us today, but he actually spoke to this bill back in April. He was responding to the government lead by the Minister of Transportation saying that we should be congratulating Mike Harris—if you can believe this—for the history of this POA issue. Under Harris, the Provincial Offences Act and Highway Traffic Act—back in 1998, when the PCs under Harris were looking at municipal realignments of service and revenues, changes were made which committed this much-needed revenue to municipalities. The member from Durham is complaining because Mike Harris has never once been thanked for giving that revenue to municipalities.

I cannot believe what I heard, Speaker. This is the same Mike Harris that downloaded the most expensive programs to municipalities, like community and social services that had never seen an increase in funding; huge housing portfolios downloaded with very little reserves and, in many cases, so old and falling apart that they had to be gutted and completely renovated or rebuilt; ODSP and Ontario Works clients' benefits cut by 20% that were already 50% below the poverty line, and it has taken 20 years for those recipients to climb back up out of that hole where they were 20 years ago. The outstanding fines at the time of the transfer were in the millions. For Niagara alone, I believe there were \$12 million in outstanding fines when this POA was transferred.

I would suggest to the member from Durham that the trade-off was not an equal one. I can tell you that, having been a municipal politician at the time, Mike Harris surely does not deserve any thanks for municipal realignment of services at that time.

All right. Now to add some local flair today to my remarks. I want to present an issue about the region of Niagara. It paints a picture of a resource-strapped municipality with a high unemployment rate trying very hard to deal with the enormity of this issue. It represents the case for what is happening in municipalities across the province.

As of December 2012, the Niagara POA has 42,000 active delinquent fines, with a balance of \$36.1 million owing. Active defaulted fines don't include any fines which have a pending or granted extension, which are closed or written off or which are not being pursued. These are the latest facts available.

However, for a more thorough look at the region's situation, I've acquired a report from 2010. Looking through it, it provides a lot of insight into the trends of the POA collection process, and it highlights the need for action, which will also show the capacity that municipalities have shown for dealing with this impossible issue.

So 2010, the year the study was done, was the busiest in the Niagara POA courts. According to the Ministry of the Attorney General, Niagara's courts experienced a 104% increase in charges filed in a five-year period. This increase is the second-highest percentage increase in all municipally administered courts in the province—second-highest. There are cities much larger than the Niagara

region, which has a population of just over 400,000. Since assuming responsibility for POAs, the region and its municipal area partners have each received \$12 million in net revenue, while payments to the province during that same period amounted to just over \$16 million, or 26% more than each municipal partner. So the province isn't doing any work, but they're clearly getting a better share of the profits.

From 2009 to 2010, the number of customers served at Niagara's service counters increased by 4%, with a 50% increase from 2005 to 2010. Also, the burden of the courts is growing: appeal applications increased by 13%, reopenings by 61% and trial requests—a very expensive process—by 30%. These increases have forced the regional senior justice of the peace to permanently increase the master court schedule from 367 to 442 days, as well as the scheduled 112 days of court on an ad hoc basis. Given these growth trends, there's a concern that Niagara is approaching maximum court capacity. The age and conditions of facilities can be expected to lead to escalating maintenance and operating costs in the future. These higher costs will undercut the potential for maximizing net revenue. Maximizing net revenue assists both the region and the area municipalities, because that funding is actually split.

When it comes to delinquent cases, in 2010, 1,100 cases on average were added each month, representing a 34% increase from 2009 and \$24.2 million in delinquency in 2010. The Niagara POA staff work collaboratively with defendants who are unable to pay the full fine amount yet need to retain their driver's licence to remain gainfully employed. So the region of Niagara at least has this sense of wanting to work with people who rely on their car because of the lack of reliable public transit. Staff review the defendant's financial status to determine their ability to pay, and they will negotiate a payment plan.

The report states that given the recent economic downturn it's no surprise that the total dollar value is up and the number of delinquent cases continues to increase. This is important to why we should move forward with this bill and try to address the unpaid fine issue. We must consider, though, the hardships faced by Ontarians in today's economy. While it's important that we enforce fines on offenders who are contributing to unsafe road conditions, we have to work with them to ensure that their ability to pay is considered and not negatively impacted by collection tools.

It's clear, however, that municipalities are being pushed to the limit of their resources and their capacities and vast changes need to occur to help municipalities collect unpaid fines. We see now that the government is touting their investment in infrastructure as their plan to help municipalities. They talk about—I think it's a \$100-million investment to help rural Ontario. Surely that number sounds big. It may sound big out there to the viewers of this today, but, in fact, there are 444 municipalities in this province. There may be—I don't know—300, 350 that are small, rural, and this will have a very small impact on those communities.

0940

I'll tell you this: In my municipality of Welland, the bridge crossing the canal—just to repaint it is a \$10-million price tag. It's been on the books for 10 years and they can't afford to even get to that project. It's \$10 million for one bridge. A small bridge over Lyons Creek in my riding, out in the rural part of my riding: \$1 million for a bridge to go over that creek because it had to meet the standards of the MTO and the MOE.

We've known for a long time that this government is interested in press conferences and newspaper headlines more than actually bringing about positive change. If we want to help municipalities in a significant way, we need to deal with issues like unpaid fines and waste management. We need to do the hard work that's necessary to help municipalities deal with services that were down-loaded to them a decade ago.

I want to spend the rest of my time talking about MTO issues. The member from Aurora raised some important issues under MTO when he did his lead, and I wanted to take this opportunity to raise some of those issues with the Minister of Transportation, who is here.

Probably on a weekly basis, we get complaints on a variety of issues from constituents in the riding around the Ministry of Transportation. One of the common threads is the wait times to get through to ServiceOntario. On average, people tell us that the wait time on the phone can be 50 minutes to an hour, for somebody sitting, waiting on the phone to try and get through to ask a question.

We had a man, actually, who was trying to arrange for MTO to come out and do presentations to a seniors' group around MTO issues. They were unable to effect that. Although they had had a commitment from the MTO, a verbal commitment, at the end of the day, the MTO couldn't meet that commitment. I've got copies of letters here from constituents who have come into my office; it's taken months to actually resolve their issues.

The member from Aurora spoke about a staff member. I'm assuming she's a senior staff member at the Ministry of Transportation. Her name is Elena Tersigni. He highly commended her in his time when he was in that ministry, when the PCs were in government. He said in his statement that day that he thought there needed to be a review of the Ministry of Transportation and it was because of constituent concerns. I'm sure that all of us in this House have concerns coming from our constituents and I wanted to share a couple of those with you today.

Here's one. I've got a letter dated April 5:

"You'll recall ... I faxed you what appears to be a confirmation of ... medical reports from Dr. K. Kundi (the constituent's family doctor)" to your ministry on January 18.

"Elena, it does appear that the ministry did receive these reports.

"I am hoping"—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough—Rouge River is a little loud.

Ms. Cindy Forster: "I am hoping you can arrange to expedite this medical review, if in fact it has not been actioned, as I believe the required medical was received ... January 18...."

This is three months later and the Ministry of Transportation is saying, "We never received the medical," even though we have a faxed report showing that it went to the ministry. It is sad that people are waiting three months.

I have one where people are actually waiting eight months. It was to the Honourable Minister of Transportation at the time, in 2012. This constituent was having a problem with a medical review of his driving privileges: "Our ministry liaison has advised us to follow up on the status of the file in three weeks. We are told the committee which reviews medical files does not meet weekly." Why aren't they meeting weekly?

This constituent's "life is being negatively impacted by the suspension of his driver's licence. He has been further frustrated by delays in the processing of information and by a lack of communication."

His suspension and review dragged on for eight months, almost an entire year.

Further medical was requested in mid-September; it was sent by fax. The wife tried to follow up by phone a month later. She was on hold for 55 minutes, which she says was a standard wait time for phone access to the Ministry of Transportation throughout the process. When he was finally able to get through, he was told that the fax sent two weeks ago by his doctor was illegible and a new submission was required. But nobody had contacted them.

He was at a complete loss as to why that fax was sitting on somebody's desk at the MTO without anyone alerting him so he could correct the situation in a timely manner. The answer? The ministry's medical review team does not contact drivers or physicians. Our question is, why not? If you get a piece of information and it's insufficient or it's illegible, why wouldn't you pick up the phone and call to get the information that you need?

When I asked my staff to actually give me some of these things, it was a bit nostalgic because, at the end of the day—I'm going to share this little story with you. The subject was—and I can share this name—Mr. Donald James Curley. This was in 2007. Peter Kormos was the MPP in Welland at the time. The letter is from one of my staff to the Minister of Transportation at that time.

"I am writing to you regarding constituent and the family of Mr. Donald Curley," living in Welland, "regarding his driver's licence. Please be advised, Mr. Curley served this country" in our armed forces.

He "returned to Ontario from Georgia in ... 2007 after losing all of his identification in a house fire. Upon return, he initiated a request to exchange his valid Georgia driver's licence for an Ontario driver's licence. After an eight-month ordeal of not being able to drive, Mr. Curley is still inexplicably waiting for his licence.

"Two weeks ago, I contacted management employees within the ministry and was assured Mr. Curley had met

all the requirements and he wouldn't have any further barriers to getting his Ontario driver's licence. However, at his last attempt in doing so and despite my assurances to them from your ministry staff, he was again unsuccessful. Mr. Curley has met the requested requirements each time only to be turned away again to meet new requirements.

"Again, I remind you, Mr. Curley is a veteran of this country who proudly answered the call of duty when required. I ask that you investigate and ensure prompt and correct attention to this matter."

Well, I want to tell you about this story, because this story is about my father. It's about my father, Speaker, who was a veteran.

I can tell you that I took him to the ministry office in St. Catharines five times to try and get his driver's licence. This was a man who lived out of country for 30 or 40 years. He moved back to the area. We didn't know that he wasn't well at the time.

He wanted two things in his life at the age of—I think he was 83 at the time. He wanted his veteran's medals, which were burned in a fire—which I was actually able to get, through Veterans Affairs, in about four weeks; kudos to Veterans Affairs—and he wanted his driver's licence, because there's nothing more important to men than their cars and remote controls, right?

Five times, I took this man to St. Catharines. Each time, they requested something different—each time. The first time we went, they said, well, he needed some medical proof that he had had his cataracts done, even though he had a valid Georgia driver's licence. We go down to get the licence; "No, you can't get it."

We took him back five times: eight months, and probably \$100 worth of gas, back and forth from Welland to St. Catharines.

Finally, by the time he did get his driver's licence, which I believe was in January 2008—so now it's probably 13 months—he's too sick. He's too sick to drive. So the man never drove again, because the Ministry of Transportation took so many months to not give this man—to make him jump through so many hoops that he was never able to drive again. It's not a good thing.

0950

My hope in raising this today is that, in fact, no other senior, no other veteran, in this country who has a valid licence and is just trying to exchange it for an Ontario licence, trying to do the right thing—because, frankly, if I were him, I would have just driven with my Georgia licence until somebody caught me. Right? Why would he change it? So he ended up losing it for the rest of the period of his life.

I've got some other ones here. I've got one:

"Last year I was charged with the following offence—class G1 driver unaccompanied. This charge also included a suspension.

"I attended appeal court and the charges were withdrawn/dismissed. However, my abstract was never corrected." We hear this probably on a monthly basis. "I have since secured employment in St. Catharines and had

attempted to secure car insurance." He couldn't get car insurance because his record wasn't corrected by the ministry.

"In speaking with Driver Control with the Ministry of Transportation and communication, I understand that it will take ... five weeks" to get this matter resolved. That's the earliest that we could be expected to address this. "This creates undue hardship and a risk to my unemployment as I reside in Welland and attend St. Catharines daily.

"I believe that the wait time of five weeks is inappropriate," because it's the ministry's fault that you didn't correct the record after he went to court and had the charges withdrawn. I think the Minister of Transportation needs to deal with some of these issues. The MTO "did not register/change my abstract." He needs some help. It still took months after this to get this fixed for this guy.

As I tell you, we live in Niagara. We don't have a direct public transportation system, as they don't in London. London has one of the worst city transportation systems in the province. There are people who are suffering in this province because the Ministry of Transportation offices aren't dealing with some of these issues. So I kind of agree with the member from Aurora that perhaps the ministry needs to do a review.

I've got a couple more that I'll share with you. Here's one. This man was a professional truck driver.

"At age 64 he must find a new way to meet his financial obligations. That is a tall order in this day and age.

"He slipped when helping a friend repair a tractor trailer tire last December. He fell and hit his head. That one mishap led to a series of events which altered his life in ways he could not have imagined."

He "describes the after effects as being consistent with a concussion. He took a two-hour nap in the bunk of his own transport truck, then got back on the road and headed home. Near his destination he hit a guardrail." It is his first accident, Speaker, in 40 years. For 40 years, he was a professional truck driver.

He is required to undergo a series of medical tests. One of those tests uncovers a small irregularity with his vision. That leads to them removing his A licence, so he can no longer drive.

Mr. Mustard goes to the doctor. He does all the right things. He sees the specialist. He sees the family doctor. The doctors tell him it's just an eye irregularity, a side effect of aging and diabetes. Lots of people have the same health problems, and they're still driving in Ontario. Yet he has to undergo a driving examination.

What sticks in Mr. Mustard's craw is that the Ministry of Transportation "sets the bar to achieving a licence reinstatement higher for him because he drove for a living and because of a sudden series of unfortunate events. He believes that this is unfair."

We've asked the ministry to investigate the circumstances surrounding the removal of his A licence and to ensure that all options for its reinstatement are presented to him. We also asked the ministry to explain the min-

istry's rationale for requiring this constituent to jump through hoops, when other older drivers with similar health issues are not required to meet the same standards. I think we're still actually waiting for a response on that one.

I'll continue on, Speaker. I've got a few minutes left.

I think that these particular constituent issues are important to raise, because each and every one of us hears about them every day—and I hope the Minister of Transportation is listening. The department is probably under-resourced and understaffed and that's why they can't get to these issues in a timely way, but it really is negatively impacting the lives of many of our constituents, of their families.

This one is back in 2010. This constituent goes to the hospital; she's suffering from some unexplained shaking in her legs and arm. The visit initiates a November 9 request by your ministry for a medical review, which the constituent has made every effort to provide. Now, you'll know that it's really hard to get to see some specialists in this province. People can wait a year or two years to get to a pain clinic, to see a pain specialist. You can wait for up to a year to get to see a neurosurgeon or a neurologist, and you may never see a psychiatrist in this province, because of the lack of psychiatrists across the country.

Anyway, this constituent commutes to her job, so she wants to ensure that the medical evidence requested in the letter from the ministry is forwarded and received quickly, as there's already a 10-day delay between the date of issue and the date she received the request. She phones the Ministry of Transportation to follow up on her file and she has experienced a wait time in excess of 40 minutes before being told that the medical submission from McMaster Hospital was not attached to her file. She subsequently phones a number of times, each preceded by a lengthy wait on hold, leaving her frustrated enough to request to talk to a supervisor. The last person she speaks to at the ministry's toll-free number tells Ms. Hayward that it's impossible. It's impossible that she has had to wait this long; it's impossible that they didn't get the medical information.

Our liaison with your ministry gives assurances that her licence in this particular situation will still be valid on this date, as the medical submission requirement has been met. But we've undertaken to follow up so that Ms. Hayward can find out at the earliest opportunity the status of her medical review.

This constituent is disappointed with the treatment that she received by the Ministry of Transportation office, about the delays she had to incur in her phone calls, about the delays she had to incur in receiving the actual physical information. Our office, of course, asked the ministry to investigate, to talk about wait times and the inaccessibility of supervisors and to respond directly to this constituent's concerns.

These issues go on day after day, and they're important issues too. In fact, I think they're perhaps more important than the issue of fine collections. Yes, people who break the law need to pay their fines, but the Minis-

try of Transportation is there to deal with more than just making sure that legislation gets changed to deal with the collection of fines. Municipalities are cash-strapped and they need the ability to do that, but I think the people who pay the taxes, who pay the freight in this province, deserve a better service. They deserve a timely service. They deserve better access to the services that they need, particularly these people who depend, in their lives, on their driver's licence or on their licence plate.

I can tell you that I had my own experience this past year at ServiceOntario in my riding. I'm thinking I went over to renew my registration on one vehicle, and I was told at the ServiceOntario booth that I didn't have any insurance. Well, clearly, I did have insurance. I didn't have my pink slip with me; it was in my vehicle. But they were insisting.

1000

I said, "Well, if I don't have insurance, how did you actually issue me a plate sticker in May?" So I must have been going to have my driver's licence renewed. I said, "You issued me a plate sticker in May, on May 15, on my birthday." "Well, no. You don't have any insurance, and you're going to have to contact your insurance company to get this figured out," and whatever, "and you need to do that right away." I said, "Why can't you contact the insurance company? Just make a call. Hopefully there's something in the database that says Cindy Forster has insurance." Well, there wasn't.

So I go home and I call my Buckley Insurance up there in Aurora, and I say, "Do I have insurance?" And they said, "Oh, yes, you do." I said, "They say you have to call them and tell them that I have insurance," and they said, "Well, no, no. All they've got to do is look at the database, and if the database is incorrect, it's not our fault. We've sent your insurance in. They need to correct that database and make sure that the correct information is in there for the people who actually pay very high auto insurance rates in this province."

Just to close—I've got 51 seconds—I want to take the opportunity to thank everybody who has spoken to this issue at the moment, and while the NDP will support this bill, as you've heard today from me and from the member from Aurora and from the people who had done the two-minute comments and hits on this back in April—can you believe it was actually back in April that we last talked about this bill? It takes a long time to get things through here.

We look forward to talking about the bill, we look forward to actually hearing from the people who will be making deputations to us, and we will be bringing forward amendments that we think will make this bill much more effective, not only for municipalities but for the people who pay the freight in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for her comments. I'm very happy to speak briefly in support of Bill 34. There is one aspect of this particular bill which is very important to me personally. This particular

bill is very much supported by my community of Ottawa Centre and my city of Ottawa, and both our city council and the mayor, Jim Watson, are very supportive of this bill.

The one particular issue that is close to me personally is the issuing of offence notices for those who are caught through a red light camera and they come from out of province. As you know, Ottawa being a border town, this is a significant issue. Back on October 4, 2012, I in fact introduced a private member's bill, Bill 131, entitled the Enhancing Red Light Camera System Enforcement Act, which allowed for municipalities like Ottawa to issue red light camera offence tickets to those car drivers who have licence plates out of province.

I'm very happy to see this, and I thank the Minister of Transportation for adopting my private member's bill in this particular bill. It's an important issue for my city. It's an issue of road safety and pedestrian safety. We want to make sure that all drivers are treated equally in cities like Ottawa, and it doesn't matter where you come from, what licence plate you have: If you break the red light law, then you should pay the fine.

I want to thank our mayor, Jim Watson, for his support, and our deputy mayor, Steve Desroches, for his hard work on this file. He and I worked very closely together. I thank the government and the Minister of Transportation for adopting Bill 131, my private member's bill, and making it part of Bill 34.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I'd like to congratulate the member from Welland on her speech. I found it fascinating. I happen to agree with just about everything she said.

This bill, in my opinion, is clearly about the money. We have a government here that is broke, and this is another example of looking for more places to collect money from the same people they've got to collect it from every time. It's going to be billions of dollars, if they go back as far as 40 years. I went to a briefing by the MTO on what this bill is all about—the money collection part—and I find it appalling when we have so much unemployment, so many people having a hard time with other bills this government has created, like hydro bills etc. Now we have a new way of collecting more money from the same people who are having a hard time out there paying the bills the government already gives them.

There are all kinds of cases of hardship and tough times among all these unemployed people. Imagine going back to somebody some years afterwards who has now lost his job, because he's one of the 500,000 unemployed people here, and saying, "You didn't pay your ticket some years ago." Or maybe you're unhealthy or maybe you lost your licence for some reason. You're asking people who can't give to give more.

I think what we're going to find here is that you're going to force people to do things they wouldn't otherwise do. They're going to break the law. If they have to drive to go to the hospital, if they have to drive to get groceries

and they haven't got a licence because they can't pay the fines, they're going to do it. And if you don't have a licence, why do you need insurance? So they're not going to have insurance. We're going to create and force people to do things they wouldn't normally do.

It's a bad idea, Mr. Speaker, and it's all about the money. It's a government that's broke that's doing it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Welland for her remarks. I think she showed a strong grasp of the policy issues related to this legislation and also brought a wealth of experience based on her own background as a municipally elected official. I think that kind of experience is really helpful for us in this House as we debate issues that affect municipal downloading.

Certainly she has been working very hard on behalf of her constituents, and we heard that from the number of issues she identified with the bureaucratic roadblocks that people are experiencing in her riding and in all of our ridings in dealing with different government ministries.

There were a couple of issues she raised that I found particularly insightful and important as we consider the content of this bill and moving forward on this issue. We know that there has been significant downloading of responsibilities to municipalities without providing municipalities with the tools they need to enforce these new responsibilities. We've seen municipalities struggling to deal with infrastructure deficits. The member from Welland mentioned my own community of London and the challenges that we've been experiencing to improve our transit system, the length of time that's going to be required to introduce a more effective transit strategy for the people of London.

Municipalities have been asking for this for a very long time. It's very much needed. I really appreciate the comments that have been made and the support that has been stated for this bill. It's an important one and I think it's time to move forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Every once in a while you hear a comment in here that sort of stops you dead in your tracks. I listened carefully to the member opposite and I thought it was a thoughtful intervention. I was very shocked by the response of the member from Mississippi Mills.

This is about people who endanger the lives of seniors, of children. This is about people who commit serious and dangerous acts on our roads for the privilege of driving. This is about a financial penalty for people who endanger other people's lives.

Whatever happened to the Conservatives who believed in personal responsibility? The fines for this, relatively speaking, in my role, are relatively minor for the danger these people provide. A cash grab for the provincial government, the honourable member suggests: What absolute nonsense. All of the money does not come to the government; it does not come to us at all in Ontario. This

is money for municipalities to improve traffic lights, crossing guards, make our communities safer and help with police enforcement. We fund 700 police officers. We have uploaded health and social services that were downloaded by the previous government.

Comments were made about London. We have \$14 billion in infrastructure. London's priority, from their municipal council, is not public transit; it is four major interchanges, which we're paying for as a provincial government. At 100% a pop, that's about \$40 million. I have been meeting with London Transit to try and engage them. They also get the gas tax. They're also not having to pay health or social services. They have more financial room. Infrastructure spending traditionally, until we came to government, was \$3 billion; it's now \$14 billion. London has never had more money available to it in its history. Any time they want to expand a transit line or put a proposal in, like the ones Kitchener or Ottawa has, we'll be all over it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Welland has two minutes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to thank the members from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, London West, the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Transportation for their comments.

I think this issue is about doing the right thing and it's about making sure people are punished for breaking the law, as a way to hopefully prevent them from breaking the law again. But I don't think we're talking about bad people here. Every one of us can have an infraction of the law at some point in time around driving offences. It is about money as well. It's about putting some money to that to actually send a message to offenders.

I think that perhaps there needs to be a review of the revenue-sharing of these fines, because the municipal portion is certainly getting less and less as they have to improve the infrastructure to collect these fines.

I'm glad that I actually had the opportunity—although it was a shock to me to receive the information about my father from my staff, I was glad to have the opportunity to revisit that and talk about how important it really is for the Ministry of Transportation, and all ministries for that matter, to review and request from our constituency offices on a whole myriad of issues in a timely way and provide that access to people. Really, that's what we're all here for at the end of the day: to serve the constituents that we represent.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

APOLOGY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): A point of order, the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'll be the first to admit when I make an error. I'd like to withdraw and apologize for the final comment I made yesterday during my debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for that. Accepted.

It is close to 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Walter McKenzie, who is the mayor of West Perth, and Ken Ahrens, who is a retired project manager with Dofasco. Welcome to the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to introduce, in the members' lobby, Jeff Mole, who is here in order to circulate and help members remember that he has a petition in regards to waterfalls and the protection thereof.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to introduce my guest in the members' lobby, and that is Liz Young, who works in my office in the town of Oakville.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome delegations coming from the Canadian cement association today. I know they'll be at Queen's Park, but they're also hosting the reception tonight in the dining room, and I encourage all members to go down and join those folks tonight.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to introduce Anis Farah from Laurentian University, representing the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. I welcome her to Queen's Park, and we look forward to our meeting.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Richard and Carol Anjo from the great riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. They're here to welcome.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm thrilled to introduce today our page captain, who is Arianna Dossa from my riding of Pickering—Scarborough East. With her today are her family members: her mom, Dinar; father, Farid; grandfather Nazir; grandmother Yasmin; grandfather Ashraf; grandmother Parviz; and great aunt Mary. It's very wonderful to have them all here today at the Legislature. Welcome.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's my pleasure to welcome the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations and their reps. They're joining us today from across the province. I'd also like to invite them to a reception tonight: 4:30 in committee rooms 228 and 230. Welcome, and thank you for being here.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Not to be outdone by my friend the Deputy Premier, I want to welcome to the world my newest grandchild, my first grandson, Hugh William Wesley, who was born last night in Orangeville.

Hon. David Zimmer: I would like to introduce and welcome Chief James Marsden from the Alderville First Nation, who is visiting the chamber today, and I'll be meeting with him in Alderville tomorrow.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I would like to welcome to Queen's Park Mrs. Anis Farah, from Laurentian University, and Gyllian Phillips, from Nipissing University,

who are here with the council of university faculties. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery, we have joining us a new friend to Ontario, Akhilesh Mishra, the consul general of India in Toronto. Welcome and join us. Namaste.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. Premier, the people of Ontario have lost confidence in your Liberal government after you wasted almost \$1 billion to save seats in Oakville and Mississauga in the 2011 election. Taxpayers are fed up with you wasting their money so the Liberals can cling to power. They want the Liberal Party of Ontario to pay it back. Will you support my private member's resolution tomorrow and commit to reimbursing taxpayers the \$950 million that the Liberal Party wasted?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And while the clock is stopped—I don't normally do this, but I'm blanket telling you that I will be tough today, and if you don't get the message, you'll get it quick.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the question is in the context of all of the issues that have been raised as a result of the relocation of the gas plants. Those questions have been raised repeatedly at the committee. We have sent tens of thousands of sheets of paper and documents to the committee. We broadened the scope of committee so all the questions could be asked. I think there is a much better understanding of what happened in the process of moving those gas plants, something that we all in this House agreed needed to happen.

I have said repeatedly that there were decisions made that shouldn't have been made. What's really important is that, as we go forward, we have in place a process that will ensure this will not happen again, and that's what we are doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Saying sorry doesn't fix the problem because now we've moved on to Pan Am.

Nevertheless, Premier, you signed a cabinet document authorizing the plant cancellation and you served as co-chair of the campaign that made the decision. When will you take responsibility for the money missing from the provincial treasury? This is money that the Auditor General said didn't need to be spent.

Saying sorry just is not enough. You need to pay back the money that you owe the taxpayers. You need to stop

using taxpayers as a personal ATM. Will you reimburse the hundreds of millions of dollars that you owe the Ontario people?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you asked the question. That's enough.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Kitchener—Conestoga, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think a discussion of money lost to the provincial treasury would be a very interesting one.

If we look at an asset like the 407, I can remember when I was campaigning in 2003, I met a former employee of MTO and he said to me that the \$3 billion that was paid for the 407 was a fraction of what that asset was worth. There are billions of dollars at the outset that probably should have been paid, but that was a fire sale. But in an ongoing way, I believe the revenue—I'll stand to be corrected by the Minister of Transportation—that could have gone into the provincial treasury is in the order of \$700 million a year. That goes into a private company because of the fire sale that was made by the party opposite. That's where—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: You keep looking at the past because you don't want to deal with the future.

I was just asked this question: Am I trying to bankrupt the Liberal Party? Well, you've bankrupted Ontario taxpayers.

Premier, it's your job as the government of Ontario to put the interests of the people of this province first. You failed to do that. We are calling on you to finally do the right thing. It's time the people of this province saw that the money would be returned.

As the saying goes, if you can't do the time, don't do the crime. Your government spent \$950 million for—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I know what I'm doing. I'm not liking the tone of that particular issue, and I would ask the member to withdraw. I'm going to tell everybody that I don't like that tone about crime and criminality.

Carry on and withdraw, please.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Withdraw.

Now it's time for the government to take responsibility for its actions. Premier, will you acknowledge your mistake in taking that money from taxpayers and pay it back to the treasury?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Premier?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I have said, we've had many, many opportunities to talk about these issues at the committee, and that discussion is ongoing.

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke says that people don't care about what happened 10 years ago, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that if the revenues I spoke to on the 407 were continuing to come into the provincial treasury, that would be billions of dollars that we would have, as a government and as a Legislature, that we could spend on services.

The question to the member opposite would be, will the party opposite find a way to pay back the billions on the 407, the hundreds of millions on the Eglinton subway, the stranded hydro debt? I think the member opposite understands that that is forgone revenue from the provincial treasury, and I would like to know what her leader would say about those debts.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Back to the Premier: I obviously want to congratulate her and Jane for their first grandchild. That's exciting—

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Third grandchild; first grandson.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, sorry—first grandson. That's fantastic. Hopefully, he'll be wearing some Tory blue today.

Speaker, I'd like to go back on this matter of the gas plants, because it is clear that there's no confidence left in the government's handling of the energy file. In the last two weeks alone, the auditor confirmed they blew \$1.1 billion in cancelling the gas plants. Then they cancelled \$181 million worth of nuclear reactors. Then the OEB raised hydro rates. Then the 402 was shut down by angry Ontarians in rural communities who are opposed to this wind turbine development scheme. So if their energy policy wasn't in shambles two weeks ago, it certainly is now. There is zero credibility left.

If you won't support my colleague from Burlington in her effort to get you to pay back that \$950 million, will you at least be honest with the taxpayers of this province when they open their energy bill—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy will want to speak to this, but I want to just talk, because this notion about the \$180 million that has been spent on getting ready for a new nuclear spend, Mr. Speaker—I just want to be clear about what that \$180 million was for, because I think people need to know that.

Ontario Power Generation invested \$180 million in environmental approvals, in project planning, public and stakeholder consultations, around a potential new build. All of the OPG's expenditures related to the new nuclear planning were reviewed by the Ontario Energy Board,

which is an independent, semi-judicial agency, as the member opposite knows, and those expenses were posted publicly on their website.

Much of what OPG is investing can be repurposed for the future, if and when the province decides to move ahead. So that is not lost money. That is money that has bought information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I don't think that helps the Premier escape the fact that the last two weeks in the energy file have been absolutely disastrous and have had a major impact on the ratepayers across this province.

We know that she was in the middle of a series of very bad decisions, Speaker, with respect to the Oakville gas plant. It doesn't matter how many panels she creates for so-called "open government." Everyone knows that she signed the cabinet document to cancel that power plant. Everyone knows that she was the campaign chair to make that decision. And now everyone knows, because of the Deputy Minister of Energy, that she knew well before she was quoting the \$33-million to \$40-million cancellation fee that it would be upwards of \$750 million or more.

If her party will not pay back the funds they stole from the taxpayers of this province, the only thing that she can do now is actually tell Ontario taxpayers exactly how much it's costing them.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we have been asking for several months for the Progressive Conservative Party to come forward with its costing when it campaigned so aggressively for the cancellation of both of these plants. They have not been forthcoming.

Mayor Rob Burton of Oakville put something on his website that I'd like to quote. You'll want to hear this. It's called "The timeline..."

"On September 25, 2011, PC leader Tim Hudak says the Oakville power plant cancellation 'cost \$1 billion' and suggests the Mississauga power plant cancellation 'may cost another \$1 billion.'"

"On October 5, 2011"—you'll want to hear this—"on the day before the provincial election, in front of the still under construction Mississauga power plant, PC leader Tim Hudak promises to stop the power plant if he wins the election, after only days before warning that he's sure it 'may cost another \$1 billion.'"

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to go back to the Premier. It's really nice for the government House leader to try and get up and talk about something that really doesn't matter. It doesn't matter because, I'll tell you something, Speaker, it was their government that cancelled the gas plant, it was their government that relocated to Napanee and it was their government that cost taxpayers in this province \$1.1 billion.

Back to the Premier: It's clear that the government either doesn't know or doesn't care how much ratepayers are being charged for these disastrous scandals of the past two weeks. They are making policy decisions on the fly.

It is not in the best interests of our energy sector nor is it in the best interests of the people who are paying for it across the province. If she can't tell us what that bill means and what the people of this province are paying when they open their hydro bills, when they open their natural gas bills, she's not doing her job or she's incompetent. Perhaps it's both. Will she actually ask the Auditor General to open up the books since she simply won't do it?

Hon. John Milloy: The member can shout and scream and put on all the dramatics she wants, but she cannot deny the fact that it was the leader of her party who stood up and said that if he was elected Premier of this province, the Mississauga power plant, in his words, would be "done, done, done."

We have heard for months and months this criticism from them that somehow the decision that we took—the same one they promised—has been the worst thing to befall civilization. Well, it's time they came clean. It's time they allow their candidates to come before the committee and talk about their costing, talk about their analysis and talk about why Tim Hudak, after admitting it would cost \$1 billion—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Objection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do object. Sit down.

The member is asked, as all members are, to use the title or to use the riding, please. You have 10 seconds to wrap up.

Hon. John Milloy: It's time they come clean—why their leader stood, after admitting it would cost \$1 billion, in his estimate—and explain their costing and explain why they made the exact same promise.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontario families are paying the highest electricity bills in Canada. They've seen this government spend over \$1 billion cancelling power plants and at least \$180 million for a nuclear expansion scheme that the government now admits is too expensive to carry forward.

Can the Premier tell us what contracts have been signed in regard to the refurbishment of the nuclear plant at Darlington?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the supplementary, but I want to, as I did in a previous question, address the issue of the information that has been gathered and the planning that was done in anticipation of a new nuclear build. That money was spent, as I say, on planning, on public and stakeholder consultations, on environmental approvals. All of that work stands in good stead for usage in the future. That is not money that has been wasted. That is money that was invested in information that can be used at a future date. I just wanted the leader of the third party to have that information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll help the Premier out. In documents that we've obtained, the Minister of Energy

tells us that contracts worth \$950 million have already been signed for Darlington. Can the Premier then tell us what the final price tag will be for this project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know I said I would send the question to the Minister of Energy; I'll send the next one to the Minister of Energy.

But again, I just want to get at what it is the leader of the third party is saying. The new nuclear: There's a problem with that decision. She doesn't like the idea of us refurbishing. We know that the NDP doesn't support nuclear, doesn't support having a baseload of nuclear, but they also don't support green energy. It's really hard to identify what their energy plan is.

We have said that we will refurbish our nuclear stock. We've said that having a baseload of nuclear is very, very important for this province, that it will be part of our long-term energy plan. It's really a bit bemusing that the leader of the third party doesn't seem to have any strategy for a long-term energy plan, where we do actually have that plan.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary.

1050

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What New Democrats are concerned about is prudence in terms of knowing what we're paying for before we commit to spending the money.

We got an answer to our question about the costs in a document from the Minister of Energy, and I'm going to quote from that document: "The final timeline and cost will not be known until ... construction contracts are signed."

Can the Premier confirm that the government has no idea what the final price tag will be for this project, even though they've already signed contracts worth \$950 million?

Interjection.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Next question. The Minister of Energy won't trust me; I'll give him the next question.

I have to respond to the notion of prudence. Prudence is absolutely at the heart of having a plan for energy in this province. I don't know if the leader of the third party is familiar with the way large capital projects work, but the reality is that, yes, you won't know the construction costs until a contract is signed. There are many moving parts and unknowns, but what we have is a plan to have a long-term, stable energy supply in this province. Part of that is refurbishing our nuclear stock, so it would be irresponsible of us not to have put in place the planning in order to get those contracts in place. It would be irresponsible of us not to look at how much time we needed in order to refurbish that nuclear capacity. We have a prudent plan in place.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Premier, I would say that prudence is not only having a plan, but knowing how much

you're going to put the taxpayers of this province on the hook for the cost of that plan. That's prudence.

Here are the facts: The government has signed contracts worth nearly \$1 billion to get started on a refurbishment of Darlington, but, by their own admission, they have no idea what the final cost is going to be. You wouldn't start making payments on a car without knowing what the final price tag was going to be.

Of course, this question is to the Premier. Does the Premier think that it makes sense to once again start making payments and signing contracts for a new electricity plan without having any idea what the final cost is going to be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think it's important that we know what's going on in this place this morning. The critic for the NDP is quoted publicly, and he said it on several different occasions: He supports not building new nuclear.

Here's what's happening: We've had an outpouring of support for that decision from across the province. Much of it comes from organizations and from people who would normally be supporting the NDP, so rather than state that they support the idea of not building new, they're trying to undermine the decision by attacking the previous costs and by talking about refurbishment.

I have a clear question for the leader of the third party: Does she support cancelling new nuclear construction?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I don't get things quiet so other people can add their two cents' worth. That includes the member from Cambridge; if I ask him to go to his chair, then I can ask him to stop.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, if the Liberals had listened to the New Democrats for the last 10 years we wouldn't have wasted \$180 million on planning for nuclear plants that we're not going to build.

This all sounds very familiar to the people of Ontario. Two years ago, the Premier was signing documents that ended up giving away the farm to private power companies, costing Ontarians \$1.1 billion. Now we find out that the government has signed off on another billion dollars in contracts to refurbish the Darlington nuclear plant, but has no idea how high that price tag is going to be.

What does the Premier have to say to people who fear that she hasn't learned a thing from the gas plant fiasco?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I take her answer to say yes, she supports not building new nuclear. She knew the costs that were out there. Why did she support cancelling new nuclear? She's doing and saying exactly what we're doing. Now she's upset that the people in her party, the organizations that she thinks are the exclusive possession of the NDP, are very, very vocal in supporting the initiative we've taken.

The OPG has been very responsible in how it has been dealing with the nuclear issue. The refurbishment will be 15,000 jobs. Does she want to kill those 15,000 jobs? They have spent money on contracts. They have done

environmental assessment. They have been doing project work, and that work is now there for us to use as a guide for the next 10 years when we make decisions on nuclear. It's the right thing to do. We're not going to spend money on power we don't—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families and businesses are paying the highest electricity bills in Canada, and they want their government to take steps to get costs under control. Instead, here's what they see: over \$1 billion handed to private power companies to scrap the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, \$180 million spent on a doomed plan for new nuclear plants, and now the government is signing almost \$1 billion worth of contracts for projects even though—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath:—final price tag will be.

Now, what does the Premier have to say to businesses and households who are tired of paying for this government's electricity messes? Have the Liberals learned nothing?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: One thing we agree on—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Holding a paper in front of your face doesn't mean that I don't know that it's you. But the problem is that you're having a conversation with people on this side while they're trying to answer, and even while the question was being put, so let's just stop, please.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: One thing we've done to mitigate price increases in the electricity system is to cancel \$15 billion of energy construction which we don't need, because we have a surplus. Do you know what, Mr. Speaker? If she wants to go ahead with new nuclear for \$15 billion, then she is going to have to answer to the ratepayers for the increase. We are making decisions that are responsible to ratepayers. We have made responsible decisions moving forward, and I want to say that refurbishing the Candu reactors will allow Darlington to continue operating until approximately 2055.

We are realizing on the investments we've already made. OPG is proceeding with definition work. They're proceeding with environmental assessments. That \$180 million is an asset we can use to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. I'd like to ask the Premier a question about a \$770-million contract that she signed off on as the Minister of Transportation in June 2010. That contract commits the government, through Metrolinx, to buy 182 LRT vehicles with very specific delivery dates. Well, the first delivery

date has come and gone, and the reason that the government was not able to take delivery is that it has nowhere to put them.

Given the Premier's new doctrine of transparency, I'd like to ask the Premier this: What are the penalties to date that the taxpayers have incurred as a result of that contract, and will the Premier agree to table that contract with us so that we can see the details of that contract?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are a number of—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Of scandals ongoing with this government.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —contracts out, right across—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew will come to order, now. That's the second time. Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There are a number of contracts right now. I know that many people think of these as Toronto projects, but, actually, it is in the riding of Barrie that all the tunnelling equipment is being manufactured; it is in Thunder Bay. Metrolinx has been doing a remarkable job of delivering on 15 major build-out projects, almost all of them—I think all of them—significantly under budget and on time. I have not heard of any particular problems with those.

I know there is management of these contracts, and the timings are adjusted. They're hardly scandalous when you're doing 15 major projects at the same time. I have a lot of confidence in Metrolinx to manage these contracts in the public interest.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier should have briefed her Minister of Transportation on this \$770-million contract with Bombardier Transportation.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order.

Mr. Frank Klees: He clearly knows nothing about it. The fact of the matter is that we have it on good authority that the penalties on that single contract to date are more than \$70 million and growing by the day.

I'd like to ask the Premier this question: Will you, in light of your commitment to transparency, let your Minister of Transportation know what's in that contract? Will you table that contract with us here in the Legislature? Will you agree not to download the cost of that contract onto municipalities who are being blackmailed into taking those vehicles against their will, and will you commit that any municipal transit projects will be open to public tender from this point forward, so that they don't have to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, it just kind of galls me to hear from the party that downloaded billions of dollars of health and social services costs, forced

amalgamation onto municipalities, standing in the House, really being pretty petty and silly about this.

We work in a very challenging environment on what is quite frankly a \$50-billion transit build-out. There are changes that are made, some requested by members opposite, and they're complex. We are in the middle of negotiations right now, through Metrolinx, with the TTC and with the city to accommodate requests they've made. That will mean the cancellation of storage facilities and the reassignment of cars at additional costs. If you don't want to be a high-handed government and you actually want to work with municipalities, there will be costs and changes to meet those. We have respect in municipal government, and the party opposite could take a few lessons from us on that.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question to the Premier: According to the Auditor General of Ontario, the cabinet decision signed by the Premier "clearly favoured" TransCanada "and gave it the upper hand in the negotiations for a project to replace the Oakville plant."

Last week, New Democrats said publicly that we're calling for the Premier to attend the justice committee and explain why she set the wheels in motion to pay TransCanada more to cancel the plant than the original cost. The Premier is on notice in the press, here in the Legislature and with correspondence from the Clerks.

Will the Premier come to the justice committee to explain why she signed on to a plan that the auditors said "favoured TCE and waived the protections the OPA had under the Oakville contract"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the government House leader will want to comment on the broader issues, but I have actually not received an invitation from the committee, as far as I know. As I have said in this House, I have been to the committee, I have answered all the questions that were asked of me and I have given all the information that I have on this matter. Again, if the member has a specific question, I'd be happy to answer it here in the House, but as I say, I've acted responsibly; I've been to the committee. What I really think would be terrific right now is if all the information that has been gleaned by the committee could come together in a report and we could get some advice from that committee on what we need to do going forward, because we're putting a plan in place, but it would be great to have the committee's perspective on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The Premier has claimed that she wants to be more open. Since the Premier's last appearance, the Auditor General put the true waste of the gas plants at \$1.1 billion. The auditor specifically highlighted decisions signed off by the Premier.

Will the Premier respond in committee to those issues? Will the Premier come to the justice committee and explain why she was signing a document that helped put money into the pockets of private companies and

took it out of the pockets of Ontarians, or will she keep hiding from the committee?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, it was this Premier that asked the Auditor General to look into the Oakville situation. It was this Premier who worked and asked me, as House leader, to work with the opposition to establish a committee process which has full access to witnesses and to documents to move forward. But you know, it's a little strange that this member has changed his tune about this particular document, because on April 11, he had this to say about the cabinet directive that he just asked about: "I don't see it as a smoking gun. We knew that the cabinet was approving this process. So this does not surprise me."

The simple fact of the matter is the Premier has appeared in front of the committee. She answered dozens and dozens of questions. She has been forthcoming with documents. Members of her staff, members of her cabinet—I had a very enjoyable hour and a half in front of the committee answering questions about documents I had never seen and meetings I had never attended. We have been as forthcoming as possible, and it's time for the committee to wrap up its work and issue—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, over the summer and through the fall, I've had the opportunity to meet with many residents and families of Ottawa South and listen to their interests and their concerns. All of us here know that the most important part of what we do is to connect people to government and the services that they and their families need.

I've met with a number of families and groups who are wondering what the future may hold for those with a developmental disability, whether it be for a friend or family member. After listening to their concerns, I fully understand and share them. I know that there are limited resources available and I also know that this government has consistently expressed a commitment to help. Could the minister tell us what actions the government is taking this year to help individuals with a developmental disability and their families?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I'm first going to ask for some mercy because I'm losing my voice. But I want to thank the member for his question.

Our government's commitment to this sector is strong and continues to be strong. In fact, this year we're investing over \$1.7 billion in the developmental services sector, and I think it's important to point out that 98% of that funding goes directly for services to individuals.

This year, the additional \$42.5 million in the budget will help more than 1,100 adults and their families, and that's good. Since we came to office in 2003, funding for

this sector has increased by 62%, and I know that the demand for developmental services continues to grow. That's why we all in this place need to work tirelessly to understand the needs and to respond to them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: I'd like to thank the minister for that answer. It's encouraging to hear about these investments the government has been making to support families in need. I know that there are more people in urgent need of care, and it's good to learn that more families will be receiving the care that they need with these steps.

As encouraging as that is, we all know that the need is great and there is more to do. I would ask the minister if he can elaborate on what this government's vision is for those with a developmental disability.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd be delighted to do that, and I appreciate again the question because it highlights the concern that I think all members of this House have for people in this sector.

I believe we have a common goal, all of us here, to make sure that we respond as best we can. We all want to see people with developmental disabilities receiving appropriate supports and taking part in their communities as full and equitable members, but there's a lot more to do. Let's not kid ourselves about it. That's why I was so pleased to support the resolution that came from the honourable member opposite to create a select committee. I understand that that select committee will actually be meeting today, and we pledge, from this side of the House, to do everything we can to assist them in their work.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday we discussed the fact that you had had 36 consultation groups since you've taken over nine months ago. In the course of that I had some questions from people about why Conservatives are involved in some of these groups. Of course, the obvious answer to that is that they give credibility to it.

In thinking about the matter, what we've really concluded is that you have 37 groups. And, of course, the 37th group is the most important group of all, the one that you consult with every day, the one that's making the real decisions around here: our colleagues here to the left.

1110

My question is, when are you going to formalize this arrangement and let the people of Ontario know who is really running this place?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing says, it's sort of hard to know where to start in answering that question. But, Mr. Speaker, I think I'll start here, and that is that, as I said yesterday, we are a government who believes that it is

better to talk to people who know, who have expertise, who are able to give us advice on a range of subjects. I really believe that that is how good decisions are made.

I will just paint a picture, and again it goes back to a time that I know the member opposite remembers, when it was impossible to get a meeting with a minister. I remember during the discussions around amalgamation, I tried to have a meeting with the minister of the time Al Leach, and his doors were locked; his people wouldn't answer our calls. We couldn't get a meeting with him to talk about amalgamation. I remember being a school trustee, not being able to get a meeting to talk about amalgamation of school boards. That's not how we operate; that's how they operate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: This again is to the Premier. It's very easy to try to offset blame by blaming somebody else and bringing up examples of things that you think happened many, many years ago. But the fact is, right in this very House this morning, we had the perfect example of open and transparent: MPP Klees asked you and your minister for some information on a contract, and he got a bunch of gobbledegook and no answer whatsoever. Now, what in the world is going on? The residents of Ontario are entitled to an answer; we're entitled to an answer. When are you going to become open and transparent?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Thank you.
Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not going to say it's a good question, but I'm glad that the member opposite has asked this question, because, obviously, if there is a question about a specific issue and we don't have the specific information about that contract, we will get that information for the member opposite. That is how it works.

I know that the member opposite hasn't been a minister of the crown, but the member for Newmarket—Aurora has been a minister, and he knows perfectly well that when there are specific questions about a contract or a situation, the minister can go back and get that information from officials, which we will do.

But, fundamentally, I was not blaming anyone. What I was saying was, there is a contrast in the way we do business with the way they do business. There always has been. Listening to people and taking advice and making decisions in that way—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. New question.

SENATE OF CANADA

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. What's clear is that senators Mike Duffy and Pamela Wallin and others are really making the case that we should be getting rid of the federal Senate.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I like that.

Your former leader, Mr. McGuinty, was pretty clear on abolishing the Senate. Why don't you take the same position? How can you now say, in light of everything that's going on with the federal Senate, that you think this institution could be reformed rather than scrapped?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are not the federal government, if the member opposite hadn't noticed. This is not a decision that we can make on our own.

My job, as Premier, is to unite people, not to divide them. The changes that are being advanced by the federal government fundamentally alter the nature of the Senate. So I have taken the position that I think that there is the possibility of reform. That is my personal position, Mr. Speaker. It is a discussion that has to happen across the country, and it has to be led by the Prime Minister, as he said he would.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, what's clear is that people in this country, and people in this province, are united in trying to get rid of the Senate. What we've now got is we have Senator Duffy and others who are demonstrating, quite frankly, that that institution long should be gone.

We as a province have a role to play, because amending the Constitution—which it will take to get rid of the Senate—takes provincial approval. So I say again, as the leader of the government, are you prepared to take the position that in fact Ontario should adopt the position of abolishing the Senate in this country?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite may want to suggest that this is a burning issue on the mind of every single person in this province, but I can tell you, as the chair of the Council of the Federation, when this issue was raised in the summer by one of my colleague Premiers—one Premier raised it—it was such a non-issue in terms of constituency around the table, no one else even wanted to comment on it. There was no discussion.

There was a consensus that this was something that the federal government needed to lead, that Prime Minister Harper had said he wanted to put on the table, and he was going to lead the discussion. That's where the discussion has to take place. I believe that it's rightly there, and I would hope that the member opposite is in active conversation with Thomas Mulcair. Let them have that discussion at the federal level.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Mauro: I've got a question today for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Minister, our government's economic plan to drive jobs and growth has three pillars: We're investing in people, we're investing in infrastructure and we're supporting a dynamic and innovative business climate in Ontario.

Now, I know in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan, I've got great examples of what we've done on the infrastructure front, bringing forward projects that have been sought after for decades actually that we are now delivering on, that have created tremendous infrastructure

improvements and are also creating a lot of work, and so that's a wonderful piece. On the business climate piece, through the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund and through a long list of significant tax reforms, we've gone a long way to support businesses in Ontario as well.

As the minister has reminded us many times in this House, Ontario is the leading jurisdiction for exploration and production of minerals in Canada and remains to this day a major player across the world. There is no question that the mining and exploration industry is an important contributor to our provincial economy. Will the minister please inform the Legislature how our government's economic plan to drive jobs and growth is working hand in hand to grow Ontario's mining industry?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan; he put it so well.

Yesterday was a great example of that. I had the great pleasure of being at the Lac des Iles mine site north of Thunder Bay at the commissioning of a new mine shaft, our great platinum and palladium mine. It's a very impressive project, a \$400-million investment by North American Palladium, sustaining 500 jobs. It's just a great example of how our mineral exploration strategy is working.

Our government has invested over \$140 million in Ontario's mineral sector activity to date, and the success is there to be seen. The real good example is that over the last 10 years that we've been in government, 23 new mines have opened in the province of Ontario, more than anywhere else in Canada.

We are confident that by providing the right climate to attract investment in mining, we're going to continue to support job creation and economic activity that will help to continue to grow Ontario's economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: Minister, obviously 23 new mines opening over the course of 10 years speaks very clearly to the support and the climate that we've helped to create here in Ontario.

One of the projects that's on the minds of many Ontarians, especially those in northern Ontario, is the Ring of Fire. I must say I'm always amazed, and find it remarkable, the criticism that comes forward—that we expect as a government, but the incredible simplicity of the criticism. Many of the members who will criticize us on this project will not speak about the First Nations involvement. They won't talk about the federal government's role. They will criticize us as the provincial government. They don't talk about the individual municipalities or the federations of municipalities that have their own perspectives on these issues. They don't talk about infrastructure, and, of course, they don't talk about the multiple mining companies that all have a role in this.

Minister, please share with the members of the Legislature how our government is working hard to ensure the development of this project, including considerations such as investments in communities and infrastructure.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: It really is a great question. Thanks so very much to the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan. The truth is he has given a great example of

just how complex it is to realize the economic potential of this extraordinary opportunity.

We know a number of things. We know that in order for a community to take advantage of this tremendous opportunity, they need to be ready, and that's the kind of work that's under way in our ministry. I'll mention the work we did with the Matawa First Nations on a historic framework agreement, and community readiness strategies for communities such as Thunder Bay and Greenstone, which will ultimately be the transportation hub for the Ring of Fire.

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I want to encourage all members to speak to us about the work that we're doing, because indeed that's going forward in a positive way. We're having discussions with all interested companies. Those discussions obviously will include important infrastructure links. We recognize how important infrastructure is. You've got to be able to have, obviously, access to the—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —and you've got to have access out. It's key.

Let me tell you this: We are assessing a number of options that will see the greatest benefit for Ontarians. We're looking at those—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: —the most beneficial and appropriate role for—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Bailey: My question is to the Premier. Premier, your Liberal government has refused to recognize the opportunity that the development of Alberta's oil and gas sector would mean to the economy of Ontario.

Alberta will require an estimated \$120 billion in goods and services over the next 20 years. On Friday, it's my understanding, you'll be in Calgary to discuss economic issues and energy with the Alberta government. Will you commit today to this House to creating those conditions of economic growth and job creation in Ontario by pledging your unwavering support—and your government's—for the Alberta oil and gas sector and those thousands of well-paying jobs and the billions in investment that will create in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you for the question, because I am very pleased that I'm going to be able to meet over the next couple of days with both Premier Selinger and Premier Redford. You are absolutely right that oil and gas and the importance of our relationship with Alberta are going to be at the core and at the heart of my conversation with Premier Redford. I have said probably many times that I understand the interconnections, and I understand how important it is that we strengthen that relationship.

On the issues around oil and gas and the transportation of fuel, I again have been very clear that I understand

how important it is that we're able to move those goods across the country while at the same time ensuring that the environmental protections are in place and making sure that the relationships with First Nations people are in place as we do that. It is a fundamental concern to me. I have said that publicly, and I will be reinforcing that with the Premier of Alberta.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Back to the Premier: Premier, experts agree that the greatest beneficiary of developing the oil and gas and resource sector in Alberta and the west outside of that wild rose country is the province of Ontario and our highly skilled workforce in this province, despite the fact that your predecessor, Premier McGuinty, was steadfastly opposed to Ontario benefiting from the Alberta oil sands development.

Premier, will you stand in your place today and admit that the former Premier was wrong, and instead outline what you will do to make sure Ontario benefits from the Alberta resource and makes it an Ontario advantage?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My predecessor took a leadership role in bringing people together across this country and working with Premiers across the country, and particularly with Premier Redford, as a matter of fact.

It is very important to me, as this year's chair of the Council of the Federation and as the Premier of Ontario, that we understand that this country will work better if we work together.

The leadership that the Minister of Finance has taken on a single securities regulator is extremely important to the well-being of the country. The leadership that I want to take on advancing the cause of enhancing the CPP so that people in this country can have a retirement and can look forward to a decent and dignified retirement is something that is very important to me. I will be working with my colleague Premiers to raise that issue, and I hope to engage the federal Minister of Finance on that. That's the kind of leadership that we want—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. New question.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, two little girls in Sudbury shaved their heads, and they did it to honour the memory of Sam Bruno, a close member of their family, and to raise money for the cause that he championed until the very day he died: bringing a PET scanner to Sudbury.

Northwestern Ontario has had a PET scanner, and southwestern Ontario has several PET scanners. This is about equity. If a 10-year-old and an eight-year-old get it, why can't this government understand that patients in northeastern Ontario deserve a PET scanner?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I first want to say to the two 10-year-old girls who care so passionately about

health care that they would shave their heads, thank you for caring so much about health care.

I think it's very important to acknowledge that people in northeastern Ontario do have access to PET services. All people in Ontario have access to PET scans when they need them. Every LHIN and every hospital makes decisions about how they spend resources. The issue of whether or not a PET scanner is required in northeastern Ontario is a decision that is of the LHIN and of the hospital, Speaker.

What's important to me is that people get access to the care. We know that in northeastern Ontario, this has been a request—I know the member from Nickel Belt has talked about this—but we must be very careful about how we spend the health care dollars.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, perhaps the Minister of Health needs to be reminded that the LHIN and all of the hospitals have actually requested the PET scanner be brought to this part of the province.

PET scanners can help very sick patients. They give doctors a special set of eyes that can help determine a course of treatment.

Anyone who has supported a loved one suffering from cancer knows that getting them out of bed and into a car is hard enough, never mind transporting them hundreds of kilometres away for a test.

There's no doubt that PET scanners are expensive, Speaker, but the community is doing its part to offset the costs. In fact, they're holding another fundraiser tomorrow night.

If this government can blow more than a billion dollars of public money on moving gas plants around in southern Ontario, why can't it spare some change to bring a PET scanner to Sudbury?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's disappointing, frankly, to hear the leader of the third party talk about the costs of operating a PET scanner as loose change. PET scanners are very expensive machines and operating them is a very costly undertaking. So it's important that we're smart about where we locate PET scanners.

I take issue, Speaker: To the best of my knowledge, neither the LHIN nor the hospital agrees that a PET scanner is the priority investment right now. I have not had an update on that in the last few months. If that has changed, I will happily correct my record. But my understanding is that that is not a priority for the hospital or for the LHIN at this time.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Energy.

Mr. Speaker, protecting the health and environment of Ontarians has been a priority for me as long as I have been a member of this Legislature, so I was proud when our government committed in 2003 to eliminating the use of coal-fired generation in the province.

Eliminating the use of dirty coal is providing numerous and significant benefits to the people of Ontario. For

one, it's going to mean cleaner air for people in all parts of the province and less Ontarians suffering from air-pollution-related diseases.

I understand that this morning the Minister of Energy announced an update on the progress of our government's initiative to get off coal. Could you please share with the House the progress we have made on this important initiative, Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member from Ottawa-Orléans for his question.

Speaker, it was my pleasure to announce this morning that the Lambton generating station has burned its last coal. This leaves the Nanticoke generating station, slated to close at the end of this year—

Applause.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: You're using my time. Now I'm going to have to talk more quickly.

This leaves the Nanticoke generating station, slated to close at the end of this year, as the last operating coal-fired facility in southern Ontario.

Ontario is now on track to become the first jurisdiction in North America to totally eliminate coal-fired generation. Getting off coal is going to save our health care system \$4.4 billion in avoided health care costs, and it's going to lower Ontario's carbon emissions by over 30 megatonnes. Mr. Speaker, that's like taking seven million cars off the road.

Today, we have Canada's most modern electricity system, its most advanced smart grid and a diverse and reliable supply of clean and renewable energy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you to the minister for the update. I believe that this makes Ontario a global leader in clean energy initiatives.

Along with improving the health of Ontarians and reducing health care costs by reducing illnesses from pollution, I understand that getting off coal also represents one of the largest climate change initiatives in all of North America. As the minister mentioned, it means a massive reduction in climate-change-causing emissions that our province produces, especially as the carbon content of our atmosphere moves beyond 400 parts per million this year. All this adds up to a substantial improvement in both the health and the environment for the province.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that Ontario's efforts to get off coal have made it a global leader in clean energy. Can the minister please tell the House how this government's initiative compares with the efforts of other jurisdictions to decrease their dependence on dirty coal?

1130

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Getting off coal is the single largest climate change initiative in North America. Don't just take it from me. Listen to what the federal Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird, said earlier this year: "We're the only country in the world that's committed to getting out of the dirty coal electricity generation business."

If the federal Conservatives can support our efforts to stop burning coal, why can't their counterparts at Queen's Park understand the importance of this initiative? Maybe it's because when the PC Party was last in office, the use of dirty coal grew by 127%.

Our efforts to get off dirty coal are making Ontario a healthier place to live, and we think it's time the opposition joined their federal colleagues and supported a cleaner, healthier Ontario.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Premier. More than 20 years ago, a group of peaceful, respectful people known as the Buddhist Association of Canada's Cham Shan Temple toured the township of Cavan Monaghan in the area of what would become the city of Kawartha Lakes. They purchased land for its beautiful scenery and peacefulness.

Their \$40-million plan was to build a picturesque retreat that would include replicas of the four great Buddhist mountain sites of China. It would include a restaurant, a gift shop and accommodations. This peaceful operation has the potential to bring in millions of dollars in tourism revenue for the area, but the proposed wind farms call for at least four industrial wind turbines to be built right beside them, which would ruin the tranquil scenery and harm the peacefulness of this retreat.

Premier, will the Buddhist dream be gone with the wind?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I appreciate the question from the member. I have not personally, and I don't believe my office has, heard from this particular group. I certainly would welcome to invite them into my office and have a conversation with them, but I have to say that we have taken some very, very significant decisions in how to properly site our energy infrastructure.

The issue is—and I put this to the member very, very clearly—that there is an existing wind contract. I'm asking her whether or not her leader supports cancelling existing wind contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: They have asked to have a meeting with you, and have not had any acknowledgement of that, so I'll be taking that back to you. But it is alarming to me that the Liberal government will go to any length for their own self-interest, even if it means ruining a legitimate project on land purchased more than 20 years ago. The government wants to allow its own interests to prevent millions of dollars being spent in a region that has high unemployment and is in desperate need of jobs.

The Buddhist Association of Canada is a peaceful group of people who want to run something that will be spiritually, economically and visually pleasing for people. Minister Chan has visited the site and is in support. The local councils of Kawartha Lakes and Cavan Monaghan have done their part by voting down proposed wind turbines.

I ask the Premier again if she will put an end to this issue and stop forcing wind turbines on unwilling communities.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Unlock the door. Let them in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That door is ready to be used by somebody. Thank you. Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I heard a lot of shouting coming from the member from North Bay. He was one of the biggest supporters of wind. We have all kinds of quotes. His municipality did it.

What's really important here is that we have existing wind contracts. The issue is, how do we deal with existing wind contracts? I have asked the Leader of the Opposition to clarify his position, and clarify it for the purpose of the member. Will he cancel existing contracts for wind? Yes or no? He has said yes, then he said no, then he said yes. He's all over the map. He has no policy in any way, shape—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: You're supposed to answer the questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you're supposed to stop when I stand. New question.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. More than 78,000 young Ontarians have participated in the ranger program since 1944. The unique part of this program is that it places 17-year-olds to work in parts of our great province far from their homes. The program built awareness, job skills, an overall appreciation of the diversity of our great province in yesterday's and today's leaders, but sadly, not tomorrow's, because the Liberal government cut the program.

Today we'll present a petition with over 6,000 signatures to save the program. Will the government listen and commit to reinstating the full ranger program and give young people the chance of a lifetime?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I certainly appreciate the question from the member opposite on this very important issue. I'm very pleased that in our ministry we continue to be the top employer of young people in the government—1,974 jobs through the Ministry of Natural Resources. That continues to remain the same, despite the financial challenges that we have as a government, which I think speaks to the Premier's commitment and our government's commitment to helping to support opportunities for young people in the province of Ontario.

In fact, with the change of the youth ranger program to a day-based program, we've added 17 additional locations across the province of Ontario. We've gone from 13 locations to 30 locations in Ontario. In fact, there are three in the riding of the member opposite which provide fantastic opportunities for young people in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the minister. In my youth I was fortunate to have participated in the ranger program for two years. I learned and accomplished real tasks that, to a great extent, have shaped and made me who I am today. But now the MNR budget is being cut, parks are being closed and young people are not getting the opportunity to explore and learn.

Will this government commit to reinstating the ranger program and not deny our youth this invaluable experience?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate hearing that from the member opposite. The member opposite is well aware that there are about 74,000 alumni of the program throughout the province who are very active and certainly appreciate the experiences that they've been able to gain. That is why, despite the incredible financial pressure that we're facing in our ministry and across the government, we have maintained this program in a way that continues to bring these opportunities to young people right across Ontario. In fact, we've enhanced the locations in the province by adding 17 more locations in Ontario that will allow young people to gain these opportunities, and we're committed to ensuring that this program is one that continues in the future.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member for Kitchener—Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd just like to welcome my good friend Linda McQuaig from the riding of Toronto Centre to Queen's Park today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing on a point of order.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Point of order, Speaker: I'm not sure whether to challenge the energy minister for his comment, but I will make a point of order on the comment made by the environment minister. He talked about the privacy commissioner. The privacy commissioner ruled—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I remind all members that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm waiting for attention, please. Thank you. That's not a point of order.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to welcome to the House today my brother, Andrew Hunter. He has spent the last 10 years playing international basketball in over 40 countries. He has recently graduated with his MBA and will be starting his business career in St. Thomas, Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland—Quinte West on a point of order.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I would like to also welcome Chief Marsden from Alderville First Nation to Queen's Park this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: The group that I expect in just a little bit are from the Ontario Confederation of University Faculty Associations. I met with them: Shirley Van Nuland of UOIT, Sue Wurtele and Jocelyn Williams from Trent, and Cathy Christie and Constance Adamson from Queen's. Welcome to Queen's Park, and good luck in your pursuit of resolving the issues in post-secondary education.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'd like to introduce some friends and family members of my colleague the late Tony Silipo. They are Anne Marie Miraglia, Filomena Miraglia, Adrian Silipo, Cosimo Silipo, Josie Silipo, Rosa Silipo, Silvana Silipo, and friends Martin Silva and Corrado Paina, who are here today. I welcome them all here today and will speak about the issue a bit later.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I just want to introduce my friend Jeff Mole, a friend of many of us here. He has been here many times. He's with Trillium Energy and is a big supporter of community power.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCUGOG SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege to pay tribute to the inductees into the Scugog Sports Hall of Fame, which will be on October 24. This year's honourees include the father-and-son slalom water skiing champions Dave Mann and his son Michael Mann. Dave Mann's latest accomplishment was breaking the men's VI Canadian slalom record this year at the age of 60—10 years younger than I am. His son Michael's achievements included gold medals in 2008 and 2009 as a member of the junior team at the Can-Am challenge in St. Louis.

Multi-sport athlete Garnett Warriner skipped the provincial senior men's legion curling team in 2005. He also skipped the Labatt senior mixed curling team to three Ontario finals.

Barb Ward was an outstanding softball player who later excelled as a coach and administrator in the Greenbank minor softball league.

The "Midget C" Cy Wilson Motors Mustangs will be inducted for their success in the OMHA hockey championship series in 1970-71.

I'd like to also recognize the volunteers on the Hall of Fame committee. They include Leanne Ashbridge, Gary Edgar, Rodd Foster, Doug McLatchy, Ron Redman, Wayne Venning, Dave Dalton, Rob Scott, Councillors Jim Howard and John Hancock, and Mayor Chuck Mercier and his staff members Craig Belfry and Lindsay Burnett.

Congratulations to the 2013 inductees and to the committee on this great recognition of local talent.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: This past weekend, five people lost their lives on the Trans-Canada Highway, 15

kilometres outside of English River. At this point, we do not know what the cause of this horrific crash was, but it has left people in my riding and across the northwest worried about travelling the roads this winter and what level of winter road maintenance service they can expect to receive.

Over the past couple of years, many people have contacted my offices to tell me that they have never seen the roads in such poor condition, nor have they ever felt so afraid to venture out of their home communities. Speaker, this is unacceptable. This government spends a lot of time talking about gridlock and transportation issues in other areas of the province, like Toronto, but not nearly enough talking about northwestern Ontario's own transportation issues, like gridlock.

If our highways aren't safe to travel, they are impassable. People across the northwest are wondering: Where is this Liberal government's comprehensive plan to tackle the very urgent transportation challenges that we face? Many believe that part of the solution is to begin four-laning our highway from the Manitoba border to Thunder Bay, something this government has promised to do but has failed to deliver.

But the other more important solution is for this government to step up and ensure that our roads are maintained to a high standard so that we can travel safely to medical appointments and for work. We can't endure another winter of poor conditions with more fatalities. When will this government step up to the plate and tell northerners that we deserve the same basic services as those living in Toronto?

MASUMEEN ISLAMIC CENTRE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to share with this House that this past weekend I had the opportunity to attend the Eid al-Adha and the 10th-anniversary celebration of the Masumeen Islamic Centre in my great riding of Mississauga—Brampton South.

Eid al-Adha is a time for special prayers and a time to give thanks for blessings received. On this significant annual Islamic observance, families and friends gather, exchange gifts and support those in need.

I'm proud to represent such a compassionate and culturally diverse community.

Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Masumeen Islamic Centre on 10 great years. The centre provides services such as youth programs, seniors' activities, useful publications and many other important functions. Our province is enriched by their countless contributions. To all the members of Masumeen Islamic Centre and their dedicated volunteers, happy 10th anniversary and Eid Mubarak.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Michael Harris: Today across the country, Canadians are taking part in Waste Reduction Week. This event informs and educates all of us on the importance of

reducing, reusing and recycling every day of the year. Whether we need to dispose of batteries, paint cans or an old TV set, this week reminds us that we all have a part to play to ensure that those materials are recycled and don't end up in a landfill. So I'm pleased to see that many groups and municipalities are using this week to encourage residents in their area to make the right choices to protect our environment.

Waste Reduction Week also reminds us of the importance of having the right provincial policies in place to ensure that we can increase overall waste diversion. As many know, Ontario's recycling rate has been hopelessly stalled at just 23% for 10 long years under the Liberal government, so it's time to turn this record of failure around by putting the right plan in place. Unfortunately, the government has tabled Bill 91, which would keep waste diversion stalled at just 23%, kill jobs in Ontario's manufacturing sector and lead to more time being spent fighting over money than setting priorities to protect our environment.

So I hope that Waste Reduction Week will help to convince my colleagues on the other side of the House to do the right thing: Drop Bill 91 and table a real plan today.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Catherine Fife: I rise today to speak about worker safety in the province of Ontario. On Friday, October 11, as Kitchener-Waterloo was celebrating the opening ceremonies of Oktoberfest, a young man working on a construction site in Waterloo fell to his death. Mr. Speaker, my eyes were opened that day to the precarious state of worker safety in the province of Ontario.

Nick Lalonde was 23 years old. He was a young father. He had a 19-month-old daughter with his girlfriend, Chelsey Suchard. I'd like to again offer my condolences to the family.

Like many young people, Nick worked in construction seasonally. During the winter months he worked at a restaurant. Nick had many friends and a loving family, and his loss leaves a void in all of their lives.

No one should ever have to wonder if they will return home safely from work. No one should ever have to worry about their family member's safety while at work. Despite improvements in workplace safety, the death of Nick Lalonde reminds us that serious injuries continue to happen on the job in Ontario. It is simply unacceptable, and these tragedies cannot continue to happen.

Since September 2013, 11 workers have died on the job in the construction sector alone. In August, a 29-year-old worker fell 55 storeys on a Toronto high-rise project. In July, a 38-year-old Haliburton construction worker was killed when he fell off a roof.

Since 1998, in the construction sector, 308 workers have lost their lives in the province of Ontario. We need to be doing more in this province to ensure that number comes down to zero.

AFFAIRES FRANCOPHONES

FRANCOPHONE AFFAIRS

M. Phil McNeely: C'est avec fierté et gratitude que je désire souligner, aujourd'hui, les 10 ans de service de ma collègue et amie Madeleine Meilleur à titre de ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Notre gouvernement, avec Madeleine Meilleur à la tête de l'Office des affaires francophones, n'a cessé de déployer des efforts constants, depuis 2003, pour soutenir la plus grande communauté francophone hors du Québec.

1510

Ce sont 10 ans de travail acharné auprès de la francophonie ontarienne que l'on doit à la ministre Meilleur, et des réalisations telles la création en 2007 du Commissariat aux services en français; l'adoption d'une loi donnant l'autonomie à TFO en la reconnaissant comme une entité complètement indépendante en 2008; et en 2010, l'adoption de la Loi sur le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes, proclamant le 25 septembre de chaque année le Jour des Franco-Ontariens et des Franco-Ontariennes. Plus récemment, une étape majeure a été réalisée lorsque la ministre Meilleur a annoncé à toute la communauté francophone d'Ottawa la désignation de l'Hôpital Montfort comme hôpital d'enseignement universitaire.

Alors toutes mes félicitations à la ministre Meilleur pour ses 10 ans au service de la francophonie ontarienne, et j'invite tout le monde—I invite everyone to stand and to acknowledge 10 years of successful work by our minister of francophone affairs in Ontario.

CARP FAIR

Mr. Jack MacLaren: The Carp Fair recently celebrated its 150th anniversary with record crowds and more heavy horses than ever before.

The celebration started on September 14 with the unveiling of a 10-foot-by-80-foot mural of the history of the Carp Fair titled, "Everyone Loves a Parade in Carp." The mural was so detailed that the faces of many of the people who made the fair a success in past decades were easily recognizable: Joyce Trafford, the fair manager; Stan Carruthers, a heavy horseman from the area; and Weldon Johnston, who was president in 1954 and is 92 years old today.

Opening ceremonies for the fair happened on September 28. They were hosted by co-presidents Matt Munro and Wendy Cox, and many local dignitaries attended.

People came to see the beautiful teams of heavy horses that came from across Ontario and Quebec, which have always been the main attraction of the Carp Fair.

This year, there were 25 teams of six horses pulling wagons in the ring at the same time. What an impressive and beautiful sight that was. It is a world record: 150 heavy horses in the ring at one time on Carp Fair's 150th anniversary.

It was a proud weekend for the people who organized the Carp Fair.

CAMERON'S BREWING CO.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a great pleasure to rise in the House today to mark the 10th anniversary of a great business in my community: Cameron's Brewing Co. Cameron's Brewing Co. is an award-winning, family-run craft brewer that's based in my riding of Oakville. They've been passionately brewing all their natural ales and lagers since 1997 in the community of Oakville.

It was started by a gentleman by the name of Cameron Howe, who was actually a chemical engineer by trade. He began his journey into the idea of introducing quality craft beer into the Ontario marketplace, but what began as a mere hobby quickly turned into a flourishing small business.

Today, Cameron's remains true to its roots, with a dedicated team of beer experts committed to brewing quality, award-winning and locally crafted beer.

Cameron's Brewing Co. is both environmentally and socially conscious in their day-to-day practices. I'm so proud that Oakville's highly educated and skilled workforce, along with very strong market conditions, have made Oakville an attractive location for companies such as Cameron's to invest in.

So today, Speaker, I'm very proud to have Cameron's Brewery Co. in Oakville and to wish them, on their 10th anniversary, many, many more years of brewing success.

CHARLIE BUTLER

Mr. John Yakabuski: This past Friday, I had the pleasure of joining friends and family to honour Charlie Butler for 50 years in the automotive business.

While working in forestry in his native New Brunswick, Charlie took up the call to join the Canadian Armed Forces. He rose through the ranks and became a tank commander and was stationed in Petawawa.

While serving his country, Charlie began to realize that there would have to be life after the military, and so it began. Selling a couple of used cars at a time from his home, Charlie sensed that this could be his future.

Following his heart and establishing his motto, one that he remains steadfastly faithful to, "Serving One Customer at a Time," Charlie grew from that home base to owning a number of dealerships, most notably his flagship Butler GM Cadillac in Pembroke, Ontario.

His success has benefited his community as well. Charlie is well known as a philanthropist who has never been shy to support his community. While some of his charitable works are widely known, there are so many more that no one ever hears about except the recipients of his generosity. At the age of 82, Charlie can still be found daily in his office at Butler.

At the reception the other night, he showed me once again how hands-on he really is. While I was admiring a particular Corvette on display, Charlie, without ever looking, told me everything about the car, including the list price to the penny.

It's always a great story when you can talk about someone reaching the pinnacle of success, largely by their own efforts and honest business practices. Charlie Butler is such a man. I congratulate Charlie, his good wife Betty, their families and their staff on this tremendous milestone and wish them many, many more years of success.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. I just want to know from the member from Renfrew: Did you buy the car?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: He's not listening to you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He's still not listening to me. Did you buy it?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No. There were too many pennies involved.

TONY SILIPO

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Mr. Tony Silipo, former member of this Legislature for Dovercourt, with a representative from each caucus speaking for up to five minutes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to pay tribute to former member Tony Silipo. Do we agree? Agreed.

We'll start with the member for York South-Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a real honour for me to speak on behalf of my party and our Premier in tribute to the former MPP for Dovercourt, the late Tony Silipo, in the presence of his family. We welcome here at Queen's Park his wife, Anne Marie Miraglia; his son, Adrian Silipo; his mother, Signora Rosa Silipo; sisters Josie and Silvana; his brother, Cosimo; his mother-in-law, Filomena Miraglia; and his good friend Martin Silva.

Although I did not have the pleasure to serve with him in this House, I did know Tony Silipo. I got to know him in my role as a journalist and anchor at OMNI television.

Tony was a man of integrity, a straight shooter whose genuine compassion for others endeared him to all who knew him. He was a quiet man who never heckled, and whose ability to listen intently to different points of view earned him the respect of his supporters and the esteem of his opponents. Throughout his endeavours, his ultimate objective was to identify the common ground and to find solutions.

The former member for Dovercourt held a remarkable record of dedicated service to his constituents and to this province during his tenure of nine years here at Queen's Park. His unwavering commitment to public service was evident in everything he did, in and out of the House.

Tony's public life, as we know, began in 1978 as a trustee to the Toronto public school board, of which he then became chair in 1989. It was during this period of time that I first had the opportunity to meet him and to interview him on a number of occasions, as he was a tireless champion of heritage language programs.

After being elected to the Legislature in 1990, he joined Bob Rae's cabinet, first as Minister of Education and then as Minister of Community and Social Services. As education minister, he is remembered in our province for changing the practice of streaming students from immigrant and working-class families into non-academic courses. This opened the doors to higher education for many immigrant children.

Not everyone may know that Tony Silipo was born in Italy, in Calabria to be exact, in the very, very small town of Martone, in 1957. He arrived in Canada at the tender age of 12 and never lost contact with his roots. He remained a proud son of Calabria. I recall his joy and delight when, as education minister, he returned to his birthplace in 1992 to receive honorary citizenship and was followed by a substantial number of Canadian and Italian media reporters. Even though he had been living in Canada for decades, he surprised Italian reporters when he stated that the passage of time had not diminished his love for his ancient hometown, and he remained extremely proud of his roots.

1520

One of my former colleagues at OMNI, Mr. Corrado Paina, who is here today with us in the House, who went on to work with Tony Silipo, remembers that trip very well and how the sublime geography of this ancient land and the sea that surrounds the region was etched indelibly in their memory and was reflected in the character and the spirit of the man.

After public life, Silipo continued his career as vice-chair of the workplace safety and appeals tribunal and remained active within the Italian-Canadian community, taking on the role of president of the Calabria federation of Canada. He had a dream.

Well-known journalist and author Antonio Nicaso, who succeeded Tony in that presidency, describes Tony Silipo as a man of vision who wanted to build a cultural centre for the Calabrian community in the GTA. Nicaso remembers Silipo as a unifying figure, a positive spirit whose charisma rallied people to a common cause.

In the latter years of his life, he remained engaged with young people, helping second- and third-generation Italian-Canadians to reconnect with their heritage.

His commitment to public service never wavered. Although his life was cut short and he died at the age of 54, his legacy lives on. Tony Silipo was a man who valued lofty ideals. Notwithstanding his humble beginnings, he championed values of integrity, honesty and compassion. We join the Silipo family and all who knew Tony in remembering him today.

Addio, Tony.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I'd also like to extend our welcome to the family and friends of Tony Silipo.

It is an honour to pay tribute to Tony Silipo today on behalf of our leader, Tim Hudak, and members of the official opposition. Tony Silipo was a member of this House representing Dovercourt from September 1990 to June 1999.

Integrity, compassion and dedication are the three words that describe how Tony served his constituents and our province—a quiet and effective gentleman. It was a privilege to be a member of the 36th Parliament at the same time as Tony Silipo, when he was representing the riding of Dovercourt. In fact, we served on finance and economic affairs together.

We sat on opposite sides of the House, but I did listen to his wisdom and experience. Tony's integrity, compassion and dedication to public service were widely respected by the elected members and staff across the House. Tony's gifts as a leader were clearly recognized wherever his public service career took him.

He was first elected in 1978 to the Toronto District School Board at the age of 21 and later became the chair of the board. He won the provincial election in Dovercourt in 1990. During the first term in the Legislature, he served as Chair of Management Board, Minister of Education, Minister of Community and Social Services and deputy leader.

As an opposition MPP, he was tenacious as critic in several high-profile portfolios, including finance, GTA issues and economic development, trade and tourism. He also served on the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs effectively.

After leaving public office, he continued his career as a public servant in his responsibility as vice-chair of the Workplace Safety and Appeals Tribunal. My recollection of Tony is that although he was well versed on all aspects of public policy, education was his true passion. As Minister of Education, he took great pride. He is remembered as an advocate for integrating exceptional children into the classroom and supporting destreaming of classrooms at that time. He wanted to ensure that every student had the best start in life and equal opportunity to achieve his or her full potential. Tony Silipo strove to ensure that no student was left behind because of gender, ethnicity, special needs or the family's socio-economic status.

In a speech to the Legislature in 1992, he called on the members to build an education system that was "sensitive to and better reflects the ethnocultural and multiracial diversity of our society." He described an equitable "system free of barriers raised on the basis of gender or socioeconomic level."

In his remarks, as recorded in Hansard on April 29, 1992, he said, "The destreaming of grade 9 in 1993 and the mandating of junior kindergarten programs in 1994 are policies that reflect this commitment to equity for every student. We are also committed to integrating more students with special needs into local community classrooms and schools in 1993."

Clearly, his passion and philosophy in education were guided by the values described in a quotation from him as "excellence, equity, accountability and partnership." He said, "Excellence means a new commitment to the highest possible achievement in literacy and numeracy for all of our students. It means a commitment to helping students develop analytical and critical skills that prepare them for a life of learning, genuine and responsible

citizenship and full participation in our society and economy”—a visionary person.

A scholarship in Tony's name at the Toronto board of education is a fitting tribute to his legacy in education and public service.

At age 54, Tony was taken far too soon. Yet we are inspired and encouraged by his talents, his energy and how he used his skills so well and so generously as a leader in public service.

On behalf of Tim Hudak and the opposition party, I extend my condolences to his wife, Anne Marie; his son, Adrian; his mother; and family members and friends who join us today. Thank you for his contribution and the time he gave to public service on our behalf.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further tribute?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can remember Tony coming to me in 1977 and saying, “I’m going to run for school trustee.” I said, “That’s great.” I had become a teacher, didn’t know what a school trustee was, didn’t know what school trustees did, and I said, “That’s great.” While young men are still in diapers at age 21, Tony Silipo, at age 21, the year after, in 1978, became a school trustee with the Toronto school board. Think about that. It’s a huge accomplishment. How many young men say, “I’m going to be a school trustee” or want to be a school trustee? They don’t have a clue who they are or what they want to be. But Tony, at age 21, became a school trustee—a young man from the west end of Toronto, in the riding of Dovercourt.

He became chair of the HELACON committee, the heritage languages consultative committee. He was instrumental in making sure that students at the Toronto Board of Education were learning third languages. He chaired that committee for a long, long time. It was represented by 40 different language groups, and black heritage was part of that program at that time. Each and every one of those committee members loved him, I say. It was a genuine love for the work that he had done for many, many years as a strong advocate of third-language learning. He recognized then something that very few people recognized: Learning a third language is a good thing. It’s part of a cultural capital. It’s part of a Canadian cultural value. Learning a second language, or a first language for some, and the second language, which is the bilingual nature of who we are—not first and second, but the bilingual nature of who we are—and learning a third language, whatever that is, whether it be Italian, Portuguese, Chinese or Greek, which were the programs that we used to teach, and many others, was a valuable thing. It doesn’t take away from who you are. It builds an extra piece of skill that allows you to connect to your grandparents and that allows you, economically, to connect to the rest of the world.

We fought those who used to say that if you learn a second or third language, somehow it’s bad for you; that you might not learn English. There were people who used to say that. I couldn’t believe it. I suspect there are still people who say that now. Tony was a leader in that regard. Both he and I were part of this expression that

I’ve used in this House often, and that is: Unilingualism can be cured.

1530

Tony used to speak Italian and French, a skill shared by his wife, Anne Marie, who has been teaching and has taught at the university level, has taught French at the university for a long, long time. They together shared that value of multilingualism as a Canadian cultural value. It’s a beautiful thing.

Tony became the chair of the school board, another great achievement; not something that very many people are able to achieve, but he did that. It’s part of that interest and desire and a view of what it is that he wanted to do. It was a huge accomplishment for Tony.

In 1990, Tony and I talked about running for office here in this place, and we thought how great it would be if we got elected. At that time, in 1990, New Democrats were doing well, but some of us never thought we’d be here. We thought that if we got elected, it would be great; we’ll have a strong opposition and we’ll show the Liberals. Well, we formed the government. Some of us were shocked, but imagine the shock of the Liberal Party and imagine the shock of the Conservative Party. They were not at all pleased. But it was a beautiful thing for us.

Tony, as others mentioned, was the Chair of Management Board—a huge accomplishment—Minister of Education and the Minister of Community and Social Services. As the Minister of Education, he did something that I strongly shared with him, and that is that we should destream the school system as much as we possibly can so as to give every child an opportunity to go wherever they want. His experience and mine was that many working-class kids of Italian background, dare I say, Portuguese-Canadian background and black students were often diverted into the technical schools and the commercial schools, and the collegiates were for somebody else.

So he helped, when he became Minister of Education, to destream our educational system in grade 9, which allowed students choices, because you don’t want to stream a student as soon as he gets into high school. You don’t want to do that as much as you possibly can. By destreaming grade 9, it allowed students an opportunity to get a feel for secondary education and a sense of what that’s like, with the ability to possibly choose a different course of life. He did that when he was the Minister of Education.

Tony was respected by all of us, not just in our party but by the opposition parties as well. He was a humble person. He was earnest, sincere—something that exuded from the person that he was. He was competent, and that’s something that I had a great deal of pride in, and so did many of the friends that knew him. I’m happy that Martin Silva came here today, and Corrado Paina, because they knew him well. I’m glad they were able to come and hear what we have to say.

To the family that I have known for a long, long time, I share with you the pride. I share with you the accomplishments. I share with you the memories and the un-

timely loss. Our party has been very supportive of the family. Our party is proud to have had him as a member. We share with all of you—to name all of you again—our respect and love. To Anne Marie Miraglia, the wife; Filomena Miraglia, the mother-in-law; Adrian Silipo, the son; Cosimo Silipo, the brother; Josie Silipo, the sister; Rosa Silipo, the mother; Silvana Silipo, the sister; and Martin Silva, a friend, and Corrado, whom I already mentioned, our love to all of you.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their kind and heartfelt words. As colleagues, it is always rewarding to come together to highlight the dedication and commitment of all of our members past and present, and today Tony Silipo.

To the family, you will receive a DVD of the presentation today and the words of Hansard to provide for the family a keepsake of our endearment of Tony Silipo.

Thank you, everyone. I appreciate your efforts today.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EMERGENCY SERVICES

SERVICES D'URGENCE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and minister responsible for francophone affairs.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Francophone affairs; it's my 10th anniversary today.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to 13 emergency services personnel who lost their lives in the line of duty. On Sunday, Premier Wynne and I, along with other dignitaries representing the Canadian Armed Forces and Ontario's fire, paramedic and police services, attended the Tribute to the Fallen ceremony at Queen's Park. We had the opportunity to meet and present plaques to the family members of those honoured in this year's ceremony. I would also like to thank MPPs who joined us at the event on Sunday: Linda Jeffrey, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Monte Kwinter, the member for York Centre; Steve Clark, the member for Leeds–Grenville; and Michael Prue, the member for Beaches–East York.

Les personnes décédées en service ont fait un choix de carrière inspirant, un choix qui présentait un certain risque. Ces personnes ont donné la priorité aux besoins des autres, démontrant ainsi une grande force de caractère et un dévouement exceptionnel à leur communauté.

Of those honoured last weekend, seven were firefighters, one was a police officer, four were paramedics and one was an air ambulance pilot. Each loss is tragic, and all of the families have experienced tremendous pain. We share in grieving their loss.

It is my privilege to read out the names of the fallen individuals before this House in honour of their sacrifice:

—Randy Burch, Toronto firefighter, died November 2012;

—Dustin-Lee Dagenais, James Bay Ambulance Service and Ornge, died May 2013;

—Wayne Duffy, Toronto Emergency Medical Services, died May 2003;

—Richard Eldon, Toronto firefighter, died May 2012;

—Don Filliter, Ministry of Natural Resources and Ornge, died May 2013;

—Jerry Hagerman, Toronto Fire Services, died February 2013;

—Jennifer Kovach, Guelph Police Service, died March 2013;

—Antonius Lippers, Caledon Fire and Emergency Services, died May 2013;

—Herbert Lytle, Ottawa Fire Services, died June 2013;

—Shane McCready, Brampton Fire and Emergency Services, died October 2012;

—Paul Wayne Patterson, Sun Parlour Emergency Services, died February 2007;

—Christopher Snowball, Ornge, died May 2013; and

—Barry White, Toronto Fire Services, died January 2009.

1540

Before I conclude, I would like to thank the thousands of brave men and women across Ontario who provide the front-line emergency services that allow the rest of us to feel safe, protected and cared for in times of need.

Ces hommes et femmes donnent priorité à la sécurité d'autrui, au service des Ontariens et Ontariennes, tout comme l'ont fait ceux et celles que nous honorons aujourd'hui.

I would like to recognize the families of emergency responders: their husbands, wives and partners; the mothers and fathers; and especially the children. Emergency service providers have jobs that are demanding physically and emotionally, and I want to thank the families for sharing these great men and women with all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for responses.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a privilege, on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to respond to the minister's statement regarding Sunday's Tribute to the Fallen ceremony honouring 13 brave men and women who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their fellow citizens. They truly are heroes among us. People use that phrase often, but we can't say it enough, especially on a day like today.

As the minister said, I watched as family members came forward to be presented with a plaque honouring the sacrifice of their loved one. It struck me how the strength and courage they showed reflected the characteristics that motivated their loved ones to put themselves in harm's way to keep us safe. How proud those 13 fallen Ontarians would have been to see how their legacy was

living on in those closest to them, especially their children.

How fitting, as well, that the ceremony on Sunday was here at Queen's Park. After all, the bravery our military and first responders show just by putting on their uniforms is part of the foundation upon which our democracy and society are built. We owe them a debt of gratitude that can't be repaid. It's important to take every opportunity possible to recognize their sacrifice and, sadly, what they sometimes sacrifice in doing a job where no day is ever routine.

The provincial government has honoured Ontario's military personnel, firefighters and police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty at Tribute to the Fallen services since 2006. This year marked the first year that paramedics were honoured at that ceremony. Paramedics Wayne Dufty, Christopher Snowball, Paul Wayne Patterson and Dustin-Lee Dagenais, along with air ambulance pilot Captain Don Filliter, were the first of this group to be honoured. Certainly, it's a very fitting inclusion and an important recognition for the brave paramedics who risk their lives serving in communities across the province.

Captain Filliter, along with paramedics Snowball and Dagenais—and, it should be added, First Officer Jacques Dupuis of Quebec—were killed in the tragic Ornge air ambulance crash near Moosonee in May of this year. The terrible toll was a stark reminder of the danger that is the constant companion of all first responders when they are trying to save the life of someone else.

We can never eliminate the danger. It's part of the job—something everyone special enough to answer the call to serve understands. But I truly want to honour the lives of the fallen. If we do, we must resolve in this place to do all we can to ensure that front-line emergency personnel have every chance to come home at the end of the day.

Seven firefighters were honoured: Deputy Fire Chief Antonius Lippers, from Caledon Fire and Emergency Services; Acting Captain Shane McCready, from Brampton Fire and Emergency Services; Captain Herbert Lytle, from the Ottawa fire department; and from Toronto Fire Services, Captain Jerry Hagerman, firefighter Richard Eldon, District Chief Barry White and firefighter Randy Burch; and one police officer, Constable Jennifer Kovach of the Guelph Police Service.

With this year's Tribute to the Fallen ceremony, Ontario has honoured 203 paramedics, police officers, firefighters and Canadian Armed Forces members in this way. Each of these heroes had a unique story, one that lives on through their families, friends and everyone their careers brought them into contact with. But they all share at least one thing in common: When help was needed, whether the call came from a colleague or a complete stranger, they would selflessly rush towards danger.

As I mentioned earlier, we owe these men and women a debt we can't repay. Through ceremonies like the Tribute to the Fallen, we honour their memory by ensuring that their sacrifices are never forgotten.

These ceremonies also allow citizens to express to the families of the fallen our heartfelt gratitude for everything their loved ones stood for, and to let them know they are not alone in their grief.

As individuals, if we truly want to make an effort at repaying that debt, we can do it by honouring their legacy in the best possible way. We can strive to live our lives as they did. No, we may not be heroes by the same definition they were, but we can be heroes in our own small way by committing to put service above self, to make our communities a better place.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I extend my sincere condolences to the families of those recognized at this year's Tribute to the Fallen. And I join everyone here and across the province in offering a heartfelt thank you to all first responders and military personnel for the bravery you show in service to all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further response?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a privilege for me to rise in this House today to pay tribute to the first responders who have sacrificed their lives in the call of duty.

First responders are the courageous women and men whom citizens of this province rely on in moments of urgency and need. They are the brave and selfless public servants who are on the scene in those critical first moments as an emergency unfolds. They arrive ready to save lives, but the nature of their jobs is such that they are not afraid to lose their own.

This past Sunday, 13 individuals were honoured at a special ceremony here at Queen's Park. These fallen heroes included seven firefighters, four paramedics, one police officer and an air ambulance pilot, all of whom tragically lost their lives while answering the call of duty between 2007 and 2013.

Remembering their legacy and reflecting upon their sacrifice gives MPPs an opportunity to come together and affirm our commitment to equipping emergency services personnel with the tools they need to do their jobs, while also providing them with supports to deal with the mental, physical and emotional challenges of the daily demands of their work.

For example, New Democrats have long fought for amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to provide coverage for all front-line workers diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder following an incident at work. In 2010, my colleague the MPP for Parkdale—High Park brought forth legislation that would have done just that.

The need for such change is growing. Recent statistics indicate that the rate of PTSD among police officers in Ontario is twice the national average, yet claims are often denied at the initial stages and only accepted following an appeal. This is a lengthy process that no one should have to go through, especially those who are dealing with the condition because of their occupation. First responders deserve to have access to appropriate care quickly in order to prevent long-term health issues associated with PTSD.

While recognizing our fallen heroes today, I would like to take a moment to thank all the brave emergency

services personnel who take on the heavy responsibility of protecting the lives of the people of this province.

In particular, as MPP for London West, I would like to recognize the city of London firefighters who worked courageously over the night of October 10 on a major high-rise fire in my riding that left one dead and two others critically injured. The fire trapped residents in smoke-filled stairwells and forced others to tie sheets from their balconies before London firefighters arrived to rescue them. Several of the firefighters who were on the scene that night were taken to hospital with smoke-related injuries, but thankfully, all were released.

Speaking to residents the day after the fire, I heard stories of unparalleled bravery by London firefighters, and called the fire chief to share with him the deep gratitude expressed to me by residents for the firefighters' efforts.

1550

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my leader, Andrea Horwath, and all members of the NDP caucus, I extend our most sincere and heartfelt thanks to those fallen heroes who faced tremendous odds in the line of duty and gave up their lives so that others could be saved: those who were recognized at this weekend's ceremony and those we lost before. To their loved ones—to their partners, children, parents, friends and family—we grieve with you for your loss and remain forever indebted to you for your sacrifice.

Finally, to the firefighters, police officers, paramedics, air ambulance pilots and others who face extraordinary risks and put their lives on the line every day, all in the name of public service, we remain enormously grateful for your service and for the risks you take on a daily basis to keep our communities safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their comments.

PETITIONS

PROTECTION OF RESOURCES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario waterfalls and natural resources are being hoarded by private developers for energy projects worth billions; and

"Whereas crown land is too valuable to be awarded to private individuals or corporations for energy undertakings; and

"Whereas renewable energy alternatives must be considered with a view to investing the profits for the betterment of the community and for the betterment of Ontario, not the enrichment of private investors; and

"Whereas the Ontario government must facilitate a better process to enable communities to respectfully consider available options for local energy opportunities;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario amend the Public Lands Act to prohibit the disposition of crown land for private energy projects."

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity to present this petition.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Oxford. Sorry; Durham.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The recognition is exceptional.

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station" in my riding of Durham;

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington the building of new capacity" in "the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario" is essential;

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation already has spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new" nuclear reactors—the planned nuclear reactors;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station" as soon as possible.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to page Kate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I missed the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan.

BEAR HUNTING

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, thank you very much. I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas the spring bear hunt was eliminated by the previous government in 1999;

"Whereas the absence of the spring bear hunt has reduced the number of black bears harvested each year by an average of approximately 1,400 bears;

"Whereas over the course of 14 years, that has likely resulted in a substantial rise in the bear population;

"Whereas the growth of the bear population seems to be resulting in more human-bear encounters and an increased risk that aggressive bear activity could result in people's physical harm or death;

"Whereas the growing bear population also negatively impacts livestock, bees and moose calves;

"Whereas the return of Ontario's spring bear hunt could help address these issues—as well as increasing tourism in northern Ontario, which could provide a boost to the region's economy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support MPP Bill Mauro's private member's bill, Bill 114, to bring about the return of Ontario's spring bear hunt."

Speaker, I obviously support this bill. I will affix my signature to it and give it to Jake to present to the table.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Christina.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Ms. Catherine Fife: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the proposed changes to physiotherapy services in the province of Ontario effective August 1, 2013, will severely restrict the access to physiotherapy treatments for seniors who live in retirement homes; and

"Whereas these changes will deprive seniors and other eligible clients from the many health and mobility benefits of physiotherapy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the provincial government guarantees there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors and people with disabilities who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy."

I affix my signature to this petition, and I'll give it to Evan.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition here from the people of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013 by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I agree with this wholeheartedly, will sign it and will send it down with Helen.

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has indicated it will be making improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton in 2014; and

"Whereas the ministry has not acknowledged the repeated requests from the community and others to undertake safety enhancements to the portion of the highway where it intersects with the Saugeen Rail Trail crossing; and

"Whereas this trail is a vital part of an interconnected active transportation route providing significant recreational and economic benefit to the town of Saugeen Shores, the county of Bruce and beyond;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario to require the MTO to include, as part of the design for the improvements to Highway 21 between Port Elgin and Southampton, measures that will enhance the safety for motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists and all others that use the Rail Trail crossing; and to consult and collaborate with the town of Saugeen Shores and other groups in determining cost-effective measures that will maintain the function of the highway while aligning with the active transportation needs of all interested parties who use the Saugeen Rail Trail."

I agree with this petition, affix my signature and send it with Owen.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services' Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

"Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner."

I support it, will sign my signature and send it with page Nicholas.

ONTARIO RANGER PROGRAM

Mr. John Vanthof: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, draw attention to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"The Ontario Ranger Program takes youth out of their comfort zones by taking youth from the south and placing them in northern camps and vice versa, allowing for personal growth;

"The Ontario Ranger Program also helps nearby rural communities as the Ontario Rangers help with various work projects and build partnerships within the communities...;

"An extensive amount of work maintaining the interior routes in major provincial parks such as Quetico, Algonquin and Temagami is completed by Ontario Rangers...;

"The lifelong skills and friendships built during the Ontario Ranger Program help youth develop into mature, confident, independent individuals, which is well worth the money spent on the program...;

1600

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to demonstrate that the Ontario Ranger Program is a valuable program to the youth of Ontario, reverse the decision to close the Ontario Ranger Program and continue to help youth make a difference in Ontario."

I fully agree with the thousands of people who signed their signatures, and give it to page Aiden.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly signed by a group of people from Toronto. It's my pleasure to read it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013 by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

Speaker, it's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and send it down with page Kate.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, despite having high unemployment, Ontario is actually facing a shortage of skilled workers; and

"Whereas more bureaucracy and red tape will serve to aggravate this shortage of workers; and

"Whereas the College of Trades represents more regulation of the labour market; and

"Whereas funding the College of Trades will cost tradespeople more than \$100 per year, and employers more than \$500 per year; and

"Whereas the Ontario Construction Employers Coalition has said these fees will cost industry \$84 million annually to create a 'costly and unnecessary bureaucracy';

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to abolish the so-called College of Trades and institute a new system designed in co-operation with stakeholders to address our shortage of skilled workers."

I agree with these petitioners and sign my name and give it to page Owen.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

Mr. Michael Mantha: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas these"—all-terrain—"vehicles are as safe as any motorcycle carrying a passenger since all of the manufacturers of the '2-up machines' have redesigned their original models by extending the wheel bases, beefing up their suspension to allow the carriage of passengers on the machine safely and providing a rear seat, many with handholds;

"Whereas the privilege to ride on secondary highways and trails with two people on a recreational vehicle is de-

nied to off-road vehicles (ORV) operators but is granted to snowmobiles;

"Whereas the definition of an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) in regulation 316/03 no longer reflects the majority of ATVs being marketed and sold in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

"Amend the definition of an ATV to include those that are: (a) designed to carry a passenger; (b) with more than four tires and designed to carry passengers; (c) without a straddle seat; and (d) carries passengers and has a steering wheel."

I agree with this petition and present it to page Tristan to bring down to the Clerks.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

"Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

"Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

"Whereas the current policies of the McGuinty/Wynne Liberal government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers."

I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker, and I'll affix my name to it.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

"Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

"Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

"Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

"Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services."

I agree with this petition and present it to Jack.

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario;

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Christina.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

REGULATED HEALTH PROFESSIONS AMENDMENT ACT (SPOUSAL EXCEPTION), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES PROFESSIONS DE LA SANTÉ RÉGLEMENTÉES (EXCEPTION RELATIVE AU CONJOINT)

Mr. Clark moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 70, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Clark.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. If I might, at the very start of my address, I'd like to

introduce a number of people in the west members' gallery today.

With us we have the president of the Ontario Dental Association, Dr. Rick Caldwell, and his wife—a pharmacist—Ms. Nancy Caldwell. We have a number of board of directors members from the Ontario Dental Association: Dr. Ron Yim, Dr. Raffy Chouljian, Dr. David Stevenson, Dr. Andy Syriopoulos and Dr. Arnie Weingarten. I'd like to welcome all those members of the board.

As well, I'd like to welcome Dr. Kerr Banduk, Dr. Martin Frankel, Dr. Jim Jeffs and his wife, Sandy Jeffs, Dr. Mel Perlmutter and Dr. Lynn Tomkins, the past president of ODA.

I'd like to welcome Tom Magyarody, the executive director of the Ontario Dental Association, and Frank Bevilacqua from the Ontario Dental Association. I also see Maggie Head from ODA.

As well, I'd like to introduce the director of policy and communications at the Association of Ontario Midwives, Ms. Juana Berinstein; Bob Kanduth, government relations and communications at the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists; and Ada Maxwell-Alleyne, the senior policy adviser at the Ontario Medical Association. I don't believe the member for Burlington has introduced them yet, but I'd also like to introduce Dr. Larry Pedlar and his wife, Margo Pedlar.

Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park today for debate on Bill 70.

I'd also like to acknowledge some people who were here at second reading. At second reading, we had people from the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, we had folks from the Ontario Chiropractic Association, and also attending at second reading, in addition to ODA and the Association of Ontario Midwives, we had people from the Nurse Practitioners' Association of Ontario.

So I feel very honoured that we're debating a private member's bill. Since I've been a member of provincial Parliament, for three and a half years, I've had the opportunity to have third reading debate. First of all, it was with two proclamations. One was a proclamation that I co-sponsored with the member for Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry of the day, Mr. Brownell, which was a proclamation bill for British home children.

I worked with the member from Niagara Falls, who now is no longer in this place, and also the member for Welland on a proclamation bill for Major-General Sir Isaac Brock Day.

1610

When I first tabled this bill, Bill 70—actually, when I first tabled it, it was Bill 68. This is the third draft of this particular bill, and I'll get to that in a moment. I never thought that we would get here.

I do want to thank all of the health care groups that are here today for all of their advocacy, especially ODA. I know that the members of our caucus want to thank ODA for their leadership role in communicating to members the importance of this bill.

I'd also like to acknowledge, as I did at second reading, Minister Matthews, who is across, and her ministry

for their work when we sat down and decided upon the final draft of the bill.

It's very unique that you would have a private member's bill that, again, would be withdrawn. On my second attempt, Bill 40, I tabled it, and then I withdrew it once I sat down with the ministry.

I really think this has been a good thing for the Legislature, to have a bill that the three parties can get back to this place. I think when we all go back to our home ridings there's an expectation that a private member's bill can make it to the floor for third reading debate. I think it's hard for us when we go back and explain—because I think we've all said it—that a private member's bill very rarely even gets to this stage of third reading debate in the Legislature. It's really not a common thing that happens in this Legislature, and I think somehow we've got to get past that.

I'm so glad that my caucus has supported me throughout this journey that has brought us here today for third reading.

I also want to acknowledge some emails that I've received over the last 24 hours. It's amazing, once something gets scheduled for debate, the way that your inbox just seems to fill up. I have had a number of dental hygienists and also representatives from the Ontario Dental Hygienists' Association email me over the last day or so, supporting this bill.

I'd also like to acknowledge people who came and made presentations before the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. I know that Dr. Caldwell was there. He was the first presenter. I'd also like to acknowledge Dr. John Glenny and Dr. LouAnn Visconti for presenting at the committee that day. A number of other organizations and individuals made deputation with their thoughts, so I want to acknowledge them as well.

Even though the ODA have been the ones that we've dealt with the most, as we all know, this represents, or could have the opportunity to represent, other regulated health professions.

Just a quick thing, Speaker: I'll go back to what happened to me just before the last election. I had a bit of a dental issue, so I stopped in to my local dentist, Doug Harvey. He was a smart, smart dentist. He waited until I got in the chair, and then he talked about this letter that Tim Hudak had sent to then-President Harry Hoediono, talking about the bill and the whole spousal exception issue. It was very good that Dr. Harvey waited until I was in the chair, because I was very interested to hear about the spousal exception and exemption when I was sitting in the chair. When I met with Maggie and Frank at another event here in the Legislature a few months after the election, I had mentioned it to them, not really realizing that we would be here today debating the bill.

So I want to thank my friend Doug Harvey, who I saw on our constituency week last week; I had a checkup. He was very excited about the fact that a discussion we had—I think it was in the same chair—that we've come so far, just since May of this year. I want to thank him and thank all of the regulated health professions for providing us feedback on this piece of legislation.

It was a very interesting process for me to be able to table the bill—then the House prorogued and the bill died on the order paper—then reintroduce a bill that looked at the issue completely differently, and then to be able to sit with the ministry and deal with those two final sections. I think it was very important.

I do want to stress, and I did at committee, as I did at second reading—because I think it's very important—that this bill does not undermine in any way the zero-tolerance policy on sexual abuse.

I think any regulated health profession that ultimately takes what Bill 70—if it does receive royal assent. If the choice of each college to either exempt or not exempt—for those that do, if this bill becomes law, for those regulated health professions that ultimately decide they're going to provide this exemption for spouses, I just say to them to take that decision with a lot of thought and ensure that whatever you decide, whatever profession we're in, whether it's a regulated health profession or whether it's our profession of being legislators, we always take that zero tolerance policy to heart and make sure that it's always the policy that we feel is a priority.

I know that a number of my colleagues want to have a few words. I just want to say that whether it be the House leader, Mr. Wilson, or our leader of the party, Mr. Hudak, all of the members of caucus—I knew that when we ultimately made a decision on how we were going to prioritize private members' bills, I wasn't going to be the first bill that they prioritized. It was going to be this gentleman in front of me, Mr. Hardeman, and his Hawkins-Gignac bill—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: I wanted to make that comment because I do hope, as part of the programming motion, that very soon we have Mr. Hardeman's bill. It's something that I believe in. I didn't want to just deal with Bill 70 today; I also wanted to give the member for Oxford credit for all his work. I hope to be standing here at some point very soon making sure that his bill gets third reading, just like this one.

So with that, Speaker, it's with a lot of honour that I have the opportunity to move third reading, to be able to debate third reading, and I hope that all members of the Legislative Assembly will give these regulated health professions the option of having their college provide this exemption. It's a policy that I think we can all share—that was something that happened that wasn't intended. Again, I just want to thank you for giving me this opportunity today, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. It's always a pleasure to see you in the chair.

Today is a great day. Today is a day that brings close to an end a lot of hard work by a lot of people over a very long period of time. I want to tell you that this issue first came on my radar when Elizabeth Witmer was in this House. Elizabeth was the previous member for Kitchener—Waterloo, the new member being at my left.

Her spouse, her husband, is a dentist. She was also a health critic, so Elizabeth and I had many opportunities to chat, and she was the one who first brought that to my attention.

Then we had HPRAC. HPRAC had done a report, they had done a consultation, and basically showed that this needed to change. In order for this to change—that is, for health professionals to be allowed to treat their spouses—it needed legislative change. It needed a piece of legislation to go through.

Then comes the member for Leeds—Grenville, who tried, I'd say on three occasions, to bring that bill forward. It wasn't easy. It required a lot of people doing a lot of work. But today, those people need to be congratulated for the hard work they've done. Some of them have already been mentioned, but I would like to add a few.

Certainly in Nickel Belt, in my riding, it was Dr. Roch St-Aubin, who was the one who drilled that point into me on a regular basis and made sure that I understood how this issue was evolving and how the bill was also evolving to make it more and more precise.

So when HPRAC first came out and made the recommendations that colleges—because in Ontario it's colleges that decide the conduct of their members. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario basically protects the public by directing physicians. The same thing happens with the college of dentists and the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, and there are 27 of them. So all of the colleges are there. But in order for a college to allow this to happen, we needed a piece of legislation.

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Bringing legislation through this House is never easy. Bringing a private member's bill through this House is, I would say, not as rare as the Maple Leafs winning the Stanley Cup but about on the same range—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's going to happen next year.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's going to happen next year, my colleague says.

This is happening here today; we will go through third reading. I can assure you that the NDP will be voting in favour of this piece of legislation. It has done its work.

First reading came about, and a few voices started to be heard. I participated in the debate at second reading and brought forward some of the concerns that I had started to hear. Not only were there voices in favour of this, there were also a few voices that felt that they needed to be heard. So we held deputations after second reading to see what people had to say about the bill, and we saw quite a few people speaking in favour. We saw quite a few groups telling us to be careful about this area. But, basically, we saw that we had more or less struck the right balance: for colleges for which it made sense for them to treat their spouse, they would now be allowed to do this; for other colleges for which it makes no sense for them to treat their spouse, they would continue to be preempted from doing this by their college.

It took a long while to get here, and a lot of visits from a lot of dentists to Queen's Park. I know that this work is not easy. Coming to Queen's Park is never easy. First of

all, you don't know where to park, and, then, once you finally find a place to park your car, how do you get here? You go through security. To say that we are a welcoming place would be a huge lie. But those people kept coming. They did have Maggie, who knew her way around pretty well and could facilitate some of this, but still it meant that a lot of dentists—they were mainly dentists who pushed for this bill, who took time away from their practices, took time away from their livelihoods to come and speak to their Legislature and say that this needs to change. Today, they can be very proud that all of that time, that effort, that energy that they've put in to talk to us, has succeeded. The bill passed second reading.

Third reading is happening this afternoon. It will wrap up. I expect a deferred vote, and that we will vote on it tomorrow. But as I've already said, it will have the support of the NDP.

Although I am really pleased to acknowledge the hard work that has been done, I kind of feel like, "One done." When the dentists come and visit us, they also have other issues that they would like us to listen to, and some of those other issues are very pressing. Some of the issues that they bring forward—and here, again, Dr. Roch St-Aubin is very good at putting that out. They've made this chart that I'm not allowed to use because it's a prop, but I will try to describe it for you.

It basically shows many different government programs that help kids access dental care. All of them have different levels of income to qualify, different children who qualify. You have, of course, children in need of treatment. You actually have to have a cavity or be in need of treatment. For Healthy Smiles Ontario, the list of criteria to qualify is different. Your parents have to make less than \$20,000 a year.

Then there are the kids whose parents are on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program. All of this is money that our government invests so that we can get dental care for kids—and it does not work, Mr. Speaker. It does not work. We're spending a lot of money on a lot of programs with a lot of criteria, and all of those good people sitting here today have come to our offices and explained to us that we can do better.

I hope that the same amount of time, effort and energy that they've put in will continue. You have a winning recipe there. Don't let it go by. I hope that we're able to do more.

For some reason that escapes me, our teeth and our eyes were excluded from medicare. Every other body part is included, but our eyes and our teeth are not. Why that is, I have no idea.

If you look at visits to the emergency room right here, right now in Ontario, you will see that—I can speak for my LHIN, the North East LHIN. We've had 6,091 visits to the emergency room for dental care.

In 2001—because this is the last year that I could find stats for—56,977 people went to the emergency room, most of them because of abscessed teeth or toothaches,

but because of dental pain, and it cost our system a ton of money.

An average emergency room visit will cost the health care system \$513, and we will pay that \$513 if you go to the emergency room with an abscessed tooth. But all of those good people will tell you that it would have been a whole lot cheaper to have good preventative oral health, to have this cavity filled before it abscessed and to actually have good oral health.

I have this petition with me. It's called, "Why Am I Living With Pain and Infection?" I will read it to you. I'll read the English one because I had the French one first:

"Thousands of adults live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care.

"OHIP pays to treat pain and infection in every part of the body except the mouth.

"I support extending provincial programs to include adults who need, and cannot afford, emergency dental treatment."

If you look at people living on Ontario Works or people depending on the Ontario Disability Support Program, the working poor, the people who were previously employed, their badge of dishonour is their teeth. A lot of them never smile. It's pretty hard to go to a job interview and secure this good job when you don't smile.

Why don't they smile? Well, because they're missing teeth, because their teeth are rotten, because their teeth really look bad, because their oral health is so bad that their breath is really bothering them and everybody else in the room. This is the badge of dishonour that every poor person in Ontario has to bear with them every single day of their lives. Why? Because they cannot access the good service that those people are willing to give us. We will pay the \$513 once it's too late, once the tooth is abscessed and once they end up in the emergency room, but we won't help them have a healthy smile. We won't help them with their oral health.

I know that today is a day of celebration, a day of culmination of a lot of work, and I'm really happy to be part of this, but I wouldn't want to let that day go by, when all of the dentists are here today, without talking to you about the risk that we put Ontarians in because we don't have a good dental health plan.

People who have dental coverage go to the dentist regularly. The member for Leeds—Grenville knows that very well. He heard about this issue while he was going for his regular checkup with his dentist.

But when you can barely make ends meet, when you have a choice between paying rent and electricity, buying food or going to the dentist, it's the going to the dentist that usually gets passed over.

Public Health Ontario, an agency led by Dr. King, found out in a report that one in every five Ontarians does not visit a dentist at all. They just don't go to the dentist because they can't afford it.

Ontario has the lowest rate of public funding for dental care in Canada.

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Ontario is not the only one where teeth were excluded from medicare. All the provinces' medicare is the same,

no matter what province you are in. But other provinces have put in place government-funded programs to allow people to go to the dentist.

In Ontario in 2005—the stats are a little bit dated—71% of Ontarians visited the dentist. But, if you look at lower income and lower education, only half of this—not even 30% of them—went to the dentist. Ontarians with lower income and lower education, as well as those with no insurance, don't go to the dentist. The same thing is true for people over 65, because most people over 65 lose their dental benefits and they can't go to the dentist.

When we ask people who go to the dentist why they don't go, the number one reason is that they can't afford it. For low-income Ontarians, the most likely reported mouth condition that causes them to avoid social interactions like laughing, conversation or smiling is their teeth. It is very isolating. Once you have bad teeth, once you have lost some of your front teeth, it is really hard to be socially active. You get discriminated against the minute you open your mouth, the minute you try to smile.

Thousands of people in Ontario suffer with pain and infection from poor oral health, and many have no choice but to go to the emergency room, where they can get a painkiller and get treated for their infection, but they still won't get dental treatment, because we don't pay for this.

If you take the 56,977 people who went to emerg, St. Michael's tells us that the average cost for them is 513 bucks. I'm strong in math: You've just spent \$30 million of ER visits treating pain and inflammation, but you still don't have dental care. This problem has a hard chance of reoccurring or of you losing your teeth. I think this money could be better spent.

To make matters worse, not only is it terrible not to be able to smile, not to be able to have nice teeth, but research shows us that there is a direct link between poor oral health and diabetes, between poor oral health and cardiovascular disease, between poor oral health and pneumonia and Alzheimer's. What does that mean? That means that all those people that cannot afford to go to the dentist are at higher risk of getting diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, pneumonia and Alzheimer's.

Those are not the kinds of health problems that are solved easily. Those are not the kinds of health problems that I would like to be subject to. Why are we not listening to the dentists who have come into our offices and told us that the patchwork of services we have now is not working, that we are spending tens of millions of dollars and we're not getting what we need out of this?

We have four programs for kids: Children In Need Of Treatment, better known as CINOT; Healthy Smiles; Ontario Works; and the Ontario Disability Support Program. There is overlap, there is confusion, there is a whole bunch of bureaucracy, and none of this works.

Let's start with Healthy Smiles. In 2010, the government proudly announced Healthy Smiles Ontario, which offers preventive and early-treatment dental care for low-income children under the age of 18. This is a really good step in the right direction. I was proud when the Minister

of Health put that out. It seemed like the tide was turning a little bit; we were going to be investing in oral health.

It sounded great, and it still sounds great, except that today, at 26 CHCs that are offering oral health services, the good news is a little bit short, because a lot of those programs have not been supported financially. There is a problem between the health units and the community health centres: that the eligibility level has been put at \$20,000, which means that for a lot of kids whose parents make just a little bit above \$20,000, they can't access the program. If you have a mum and dad working part-time on low income and they make just over \$20,000—we all know the price of raising kids; we all know how expensive it is. Well, if you make \$21,000 and are supporting yourself and a child, chances are you don't have the money to go to the dentist. The ceiling has been put so low that only 12,000 children were able to access the program. Also, although the program was funded for—I think the goal was to serve 130,000 children who were not having access to dental care; we've served only 12,000. There is a big difference between the two. The province recognized that there were close to 130,000 children in Ontario who did not have access to dental care, who should have access to dental care. They put a program in place. But then the program's criteria were so strict that not even 10% of them were able to gain access. For the rest of them, their parents made a little bit too much money. They couldn't go. So what happened? Well, the Toronto Star got involved, and they did freedom of access of information. This is how we found out that Healthy Smiles, which had been rolled out as a \$45-million program, was underspent. Kids could not get access to the dentist, and some of the funds were redirected to other programs. That redirection did not make the front page of the paper, was not brought with a minister announcement. They just underspent in this program, and hundreds of thousands of kids who don't have access to dentists continue to not have access, which is a real shame.

While funding has shrunk, the need has not. Today, Ontario children who are in need of care continue to be turned away from existing dental programs simply because they do not meet what I would call the faulty criteria that were set by the ministry. I would say that the ministry's poor handling of this program is felt in every community in our province.

The stories are heartbreaking. Some of the stories were shared with us by the dentists who have come to Queen's Park on a regular basis. The petitions that have been started—there's a postcard petition, but there's also a petition that is read in this House quite regularly, and I will read it into the record because this petition comes from every part of our beautiful province. It reads as follows:

"Whereas thousands" of Ontarians "live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

"Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

"Whereas the programs were designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

"Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

To "do all in its power to stop the dental fund being diverted to support other programs; and

To "fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need."

People from all sides of the House have read those petitions. People throughout Ontario are saying, "You have identified a pot of money. You have identified a need. Let us gain access."

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I also wanted to talk a little bit about the April 2012 report by our Chief Medical Officer of Health, Dr. Arlene King. I quote from Dr. King: "Notably lacking in all of these otherwise commendable programs and initiatives is a sense that they form part of a co-ordinated and efficient oral health care system, and even less that they are an integrated part of the overall health care system. And yet, if you consider the well-established links, described earlier, between oral health and overall health, this seems to be a failure both in planning and execution." That was Dr. King's top four recommendations from her report.

Dr. King goes on to provide a detailed list of consideration for review that she summarizes as follows, and again, I'm quoting from her report: "Explore opportunities for better integration and/or alignment of low-income oral health services in Ontario, including integration and/or alignment with the rest of the health care system. This relates predominantly to the client journey, including making it easier for the client to access the care that is needed, when it is needed."

There are a number of other recommendations from Dr. King's report. Some of them have to do with fluoridation of our drinking water; some of them have to do with conducting a review of how publicly funded oral health programs and services are monitored and evaluated: "The review should include the quality, availability and appropriateness of current data and identification of missing data in order to improve programs and services."

What was she really saying, Mr. Speaker? She was saying the program has been announced, the goal and objectives of the program are commendable and are good, but on the ground, it has not been rolled out in a way that benefits the people that need it the most.

Recommendation 3: "Explore opportunities for better integration and/or alignment of low-income oral health services"—this relates predominantly to the journey, which I talked about. And recommendation 4: "Explore opportunities to improve access to oral health services as well as awareness of oral health services available to First Nations people in Ontario, with a focus on better integration and/or alignment of the variety of available dental programs."

Other organizations that are experts in oral health also made recommendations. Most of them the good dentists who are here today have brought to our attention. The AOHCC, which stands for the Association of Ontario Health Centres, calls for the five fragmented oral health programs to be unified into one quality program managed by the Ministry of Health: "A logical first step would be to combine the programs for low-income children: Healthy Smiles, Children In Need Of Treatment and Ontario Works/Ontario Disability Support Program dental programs for children."

They go on to say, "The province should extend publicly funded oral health care programs to provide emergency care for low-income adults. Community health centres and aboriginal health access centres are well positioned to play a strengthened role given their experience in working with marginalized and vulnerable people."

They go on to say that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care should allocate about \$2 million a year of unspent CINOT—Children In Need Of Treatment—funds to CHCs and aboriginal health access centres that already have dental suites "to permit them to serve low-income adults without dental insurance to address their dental needs and support them to become healthy, employed, participating members of the community."

The link is very clear: If you don't have good oral health, the rest of your health suffers; plus, your opportunity to be gainfully employed also suffers because of your demeanour. When you don't smile, people get a little bit worried about you. They assume things because you won't smile, because you won't talk in public.

Speaker, the advice does not end there. There is another report from October 2012, *Staying Ahead of the Curve: A Unified Public Oral Health Program for Ontario?* that originated at the 2012 Ontario Public Health Convention that worked with many stakeholders. This report offers much of the same advice.

"Recommendation 1: Combine the current patchwork of public oral health care programs in Ontario." It defies logic while we still have all of those different programs with all of those different criteria that let more people down than actually help them. We still spend the money, but we don't get the results.

"Recommendation 2: Design a unified public oral health care program in Ontario to be managed by a central government agency/ministry with a diversity of delivery models that address unique regional needs."

This is something that the Ontario Dental Association has done very well. They have presented to me, and I guess to all of you, a paper that shows—and the graph is quite telling. You see what looks like spaghetti of a mismatch of arrows going here, there and everywhere, coming from the different programs that are available, showing us who's available, in what circumstances, under what funding level and what steps they have to go through before they become available—and then it goes.

I can give you an example in my own riding of Children In Need Of Treatment. The good worker from

the health unit goes into the school. She has a look—they're mainly women—at the oral health of all of the kids in that school, and then she identifies some of them who are in need of treatment. They have cavities, broken teeth, and they have a whole bunch of oral health issues. Then you have to check to see if the parents can afford to bring their kids to the dentist. Are they covered? Are they not covered? All of this takes a ton of time. You identify that there's a kid with a broken tooth and a tooth in need of a filling. The parent doesn't have money to pay. Then they get a referral to a dentist, and the dentist in Sudbury sits there and looks at this and says, "For the price the ministry is paying me to do this, I don't take children being referred by CINOT."

We have spent all of that time, effort and energy—think dollars—to identify the kids, to check and do everything, but yet in Sudbury the number of dentists who take children who are referred to them through the Children In Need Of Treatment—I think we are down to two. The last time I checked, we had 118 or 122 dentists—I forget exactly—and only two of them still participate in this program. I think we can do better than that. We all agree that this kid is in need of treatment. He has been assessed. He meets the criteria. Things have to change. Things have to get better. Things have to be linked to results.

The government has agreed to provide those kids with support. They have agreed to support those kids who fall within that category for access to dental care, and it still doesn't work. We're back to square one. The kid grows up, moves up one year, the tooth is still broken because it didn't get fixed by itself, and the other teeth—well, there's been a couple of trips to the emergency room since then, and then the health unit starts to get serious with the parents, that they have to look after the health of their child.

So a program that was there to help the parents turned out to be a program that intimidates parents. While the government had set up something good to help low-income parents finally get access to dental care, it's turned on its head. The parents try desperately to convince a dentist to take them on, and it's all for naught. You wonder, why does it have to be that hard?

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"Recommendation 2: Design a unified public oral health care program in Ontario to be managed by a central government agency with a diversity of delivery models..."—not one-size-fits-all. You go to some of the fly-in-only First Nations communities. I represent 33 little communities in Nickel Belt. A lot of them don't have dentists at all. How do you serve those people? How do you give them equitable access? You need a variety of different delivery models that are respectful of the regional needs.

"Recommendation 3: Implement all recommendations made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) in the 2012 report Oral Health—More than Just Cavities."

The good dentists are here today. I thank them for all of the hard work that they have done. I thank them for

their patience, and I congratulate them on a big victory. They were the ones at the front of this bill, Bill 70. They were the ones who really championed this and brought us to where we are here today, with a lot of support from a lot of their members. I'm sure it has been a learning experience for a lot of them, but a learning experience that has a very happy ending.

We will pass Bill 70. We will modify—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I believe that when the member from Leeds–Grenville was speaking, it was really quiet, and now the member from Nickel Belt is speaking and we have five sidebars with only five groups of people. So I would suggest we listen; if not, take it outside. Thank you.

Continue.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. So here again, congratulations.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir d'être ici cet après-midi pour féliciter tous les dentistes qui ont travaillé si fort pour nous amener le projet de loi 70. Je dois, en premier, féliciter un dentiste de ma communauté, le D^r Roch St-Aubin, qui faisait partie de l'association des dentistes de l'Ontario et qui était sur le comité directeur, et qui m'a gardée à jour pour ce dossier-là.

C'est un dossier qui a été travaillé depuis longtemps, mais c'est un dossier gagnant où l'on voit, dans un premier temps, qu'un problème avait été identifié. Il a été clairement identifié et les recommandations ont été faites et un rapport a été fait.

Ce rapport-là qui démontrait qu'on avait besoin d'un changement de loi a été présenté au ministère de la Santé. Faire changer les lois, ce n'est pas toujours facile. On a vu que le député de Leeds–Grenville a été capable de mettre de l'avant un projet de loi de député. Son projet de loi, la première fois, est mort au feuillet. Ça ne l'a pas découragé; il l'a représenté une deuxième fois. Lorsqu'il l'a représenté une deuxième fois, il était obligé de l'enlever et de le remodifier pour le représenter une troisième fois.

Mais pendant tout ce temps-là, le travail se faisait pour que le projet de loi devienne de plus en plus solide et de plus en plus acceptable, pour que les gens qui avaient des oppositions aient eu la chance d'être entendus.

Le processus a eu lieu. Il l'a présenté en première lecture. La plupart des projets de loi passent la première lecture assez facilement. Il l'a présenté en deuxième lecture, et lorsqu'il l'a présenté en deuxième lecture, ça a été une opportunité pour dire : « Voici pourquoi le projet de loi est important et voici certaines personnes qui voudraient être entendues. »

Donc, après la deuxième lecture, on est allé en comité. L'après-midi de comité a été chargé à bloc. Il y avait plusieurs groupes et plusieurs personnes qui ont voulu être entendus pour qu'on comprenne vraiment bien quelle est la genèse de ce projet de loi-là, pourquoi il est important, pourquoi il a changé et comment on s'assure que la protection—c'est surtout des femmes—va continuer, même avec le changement du projet de loi.

Donc, ça a eu lieu, et finalement aujourd'hui—grand moment de célébration—on en fait la troisième lecture. La troisième lecture devrait être complétée, je dirais, avant que la cloche ne sonne ce soir, et on s'attend à ce qu'il y ait un vote pas mal unanime en faveur qui va avoir lieu demain. Donc, des félicitations à tous les gens qui ont travaillé. Votre travail a porté fruit.

I want to conclude my remarks by summarizing the journey of this bill a bit. After the issue had been identified by the dental associations, as well as the college of dentists, then HPRAC did a review to see if it was feasible to change. This review, this report, was given to the Minister of Health. The Minister of Health received the report, and then a private member's bill was put forward.

The first private member's bill from the member from Leeds–Grenville died when the House prorogued. Not to be undone, he re-presented it after the House reconvened, and then had to withdraw it—which is not common, but doable—to really take into account how we make this bill stronger and how we make sure we address some of the concerns that had been heard. Not only did they have a clear objective of where they wanted to go, but they were willing to listen, and they were willing to make compromises along the line, to make sure that the protection that was very important to some of the groups that came, and some of the deputants that came and presented that wanted to maintain protection, was going to continue to be there.

This bill is a little bit different than others, in that the different colleges will have to choose to avail themselves of this bill. If they don't, then the provision that says "no treatment of spouse" will continue. For some of the 27 professions, I cannot see the day where the treatment of spouses will ever be allowed. You can think of people like psychologists, or you can think of physicians. There are some professions where I cannot see the day, but for a lot of others this bill will allow them to consider the treatment of spouses, with serious consequences if anything was to derail.

Congratulations to everybody who has worked so hard. All of those visits were worth it. Hopefully—actually, I'm pretty sure—the bill will pass, and tomorrow we will vote on it. Then we get to do a happy dance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I too welcome members of the ODA and other health professionals, and the member from Leeds–Grenville. Welcome to this chamber. With any luck, this will be your next-to-last time here on this particular issue, but we're very happy to have you here.

I am very pleased to support this private member's legislation. The member for Leeds–Grenville has done a good job of finding common ground. I'm very pleased that all three parties are strongly in support of this legislation. This afternoon is demonstrating that, even though we all agree, we all have something we want to say about it.

As you know, this legislation, if passed, would give health regulatory colleges the ability and the authority to

choose whether to allow their members to treat their spouses. At the same time, the legislation maintains the strong protections that we now have in place for patients. The health professionals here know that we will continue to have zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health professionals, but this legislation would give regulatory colleges greater flexibility in responding to the unique circumstances of their membership. It recognizes that professional colleges are the best place to determine what is appropriate for their particular profession.

It also signifies what can be achieved when members of all three parties in this House put aside our political differences and find common ground. As you have heard, this is not the first version of the proposed legislation introduced in this House by the member for Leeds–Grenville. He has been a strong advocate—where has he gone?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm right here now.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Oh, there he is. He's coming over here.

He has been a strong advocate on this issue for some time now, and, of course, Elizabeth Witmer, a former member, was also personally interested in this issue; she, too, was a strong advocate.

With each new version, this proposed legislation has improved. I was very pleased that we were able to work together, reach across the aisle and co-operate closely. I want to say thank you to the people in my ministry who have helped this member bring this bill forward. I congratulate you, member, on getting Bill 70 to third reading today.

1700

This is not the only example of what we can do when we work together. I was very pleased that all three parties joined together and we stood united in the battle against cancer by passing the Skin Cancer Prevention Act into law just two weeks ago. That important legislation will help prevent skin cancer by restricting young Ontarians from using tanning beds.

I also recently introduced Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, in response to Dr. Jake Thiessen's report on this spring's cancer drug underdosing incident.

I brought Bill 78 forward for second reading. If passed, this would help to protect patient privacy and facilitate the development of electronic health care in Ontario.

Bill 11, which would ensure continued transparency and accountability at Ornge, is currently before the Standing Committee on General Government.

I'm hoping and urging all members to continue with this work, to find common ground where we can agree, where we can move forward. I think that's why the people sent us here to this place.

Speaker, the proposed legislation we're debating today would amend the Regulated Health Professions Act. Currently, that act does not allow a health professional to engage in particular types of conduct, behaviour and remarks, including those of a sexual nature, with any of

their patients at any time. Effectively, this prevents all health professionals from treating their spouses.

We have heard loud and clear from dentists and others that we needed to take another look at that restriction. This legislation allows those colleges to establish a regulation that would allow for an exemption when the patient is the health professional's spouse. The legislation would, if passed, allow health professional colleges to establish that regulation.

It's important to note that the conduct in question—that is, conduct of a sexual nature—would continue to be prohibited when the member is engaged in the practice of his or her profession. In other words, every Ontarian would continue to be protected from inappropriate conduct when being treated by a health professional, even if that health professional is their spouse.

Speaker, I am strongly committed to protecting Ontario patients, and we recognize that health professionals hold a very important position of trust with their patients. That's why I have been very clear that I have zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health professionals. Our existing legislation is clear on what the process is, and that process is transparent. Once a complaint of sexual abuse is made by a member of the public, it must be investigated by the appropriate health regulatory college. If a patient has been sexually abused, the health professional's licence must be revoked for a minimum of five years.

I know that Ontario's health regulatory colleges take allegations of sexual abuse just as seriously as we do. I also recognize that some health professions feel strongly that they should be able to treat their spouses. I have heard from dentists and I have heard from dentists' spouses that this is particularly important in rural, northern and isolated communities, where there might just be one dentist. In such instances, a dentist's spouse might have to travel a great distance in order to get that dental treatment.

The legislation before the House today would give regulatory colleges the choice. They have to have this debate within their college, whether it's a choice to allow their members to provide treatment to their spouses. At the same time, it ensures that all patients continue to have the same strong protections against sexual abuse by a health professional.

Again, health professionals are prohibited from certain conduct, behaviour and remarks towards their patients. That would continue to be prohibited when a health professional is engaged in the practice of treating his or her spouse. That ensures all patients remain protected. They can be confident that the vital trust they place in health professionals would not be violated.

Health professional colleges that wish to maintain their prohibition on spousal treatment can continue to do so. This legislation, if passed, would maintain the status quo for such colleges. It acknowledges that each health profession is different. It also recognizes the long-standing principle that health professions in Ontario are self-governing. Our government recognizes the import-

ance of self-regulated health professions, and we're committed to supporting them.

There are more than 20 health professional colleges in Ontario overseeing tens of thousands of front-line health care workers right across the province. Regulated health professionals work hard every day to provide the very high quality of care that all Ontarians deserve.

I know that Ontario's health professional colleges are committed, above all, to protecting patients. That is their job: to be the voice of patients. They work in the best interest of the public to ensure that their members are giving patients the best possible care. Colleges ensure that our health professionals are properly qualified. They play an important role in ensuring transparency and accountability in the health care system, and they put patient protection as their first priority.

I know that colleges will weigh any choice whether to allow their members to treat their spouses very carefully, and any decision they make will be in the best interests of the public. As I've said already, in this instance colleges are best suited to determine what is appropriate for the health professionals they regulate.

As members of this House, we too must very carefully consider any proposed changes to legislation that protects patients. There's a fine balance to be struck between providing patients with the strong protection they deserve and allowing the health professional colleges the flexibility they need. Speaker, I believe this proposed legislation gets that balance right.

I'm pleased the legislation has received support at second reading from all three parties. I know that the members of the Standing Committee on General Government gave thoughtful consideration to the many submissions and delegations they received.

Once again, I would like to congratulate the member for Leeds–Grenville on now getting this proposed legislation to third reading. I will be supporting this legislation. I urge all members of the House to join me in doing so.

I do want to conclude by saying thank you to dentists in particular. I know that there are more than dentists here, but I want to say thank you for the work you have done in supporting our programs for low-income children. The member from Nickel Belt certainly raised that we don't have it perfect yet, but we've come a long, long way.

I'm enormously proud of Healthy Smiles. It is rolling out across the province. We are building that capacity at the local level. There are many mobile dental clinics that are now reaching out to children who have not seen a dentist in their lifetime before.

Do we wish more children could be included? Of course we do. Do we look forward to the day when we're going to be able to do that? Absolutely. Do we acknowledge that we have too many programs with too many rules? Yes, we do. As I've said to the ODA before, we're committed to getting it right, because you believe and we believe that access to dental care is something that is of enormous benefit to children, not just when they're children, but as they grow up.

I want to say thank you to the ODA for being with us as we work to improve access to dental care.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I too would like to welcome members of the ODA, midwives and speech pathologists, and also the dental hygienists and dentists who are at home, and their patients who I'm sure are sitting in their chairs—because you will have them tuned in to the parliamentary channel today.

I definitely want to acknowledge, commend and congratulate my colleague Steve Clark from Leeds–Grenville for the great work he has done shepherding this bill through the Legislature. He has worked with the Liberals, with the NDP and also with the Ministry of Health. He referenced earlier that he pulled the bill back, he made changes, they accommodated changes, so that it would be a good piece of legislation. Now the Ministry of Health is supportive, and hopefully today we can find a way to move this through.

I'd like to acknowledge the Ontario Dental Association who championed this change, and Maggie Head for her leadership on this file.

I'd like to also acknowledge Tim Hudak, our leader of the PC Party, who promised Harry Hoediono, former president of the ODA, on June 2011 that our party would work with the association to make the necessary changes to the RHPA, the Regulated Health Professions Act. As soon as we have this next vote tomorrow, that hopefully will be the change that we've been looking for.

1710

Bill 70 is a reasonable bill, as it allows individual colleges to determine if their membership feels it's proper to allow one spouse to treat another and to then make a regulation to adopt the spousal exemption.

Speaker, this in no way loosens or undermines in any slight way the need for a zero tolerance policy on sexual abuse. Each college will have the option of adopting this exception or not. It also benefits greatly rural and northern Ontarians, where there may be only one health care provider in a respective region.

From the conversations and meetings I have had with health professionals in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, we need to pass Bill 70. I want to recognize them and thank them for their input. They are: Dr. Pasquale Duronio, in Lion's Head; Dr. John Totton, in Owen Sound; Dr. Jane Lukasik and Dr. Sharlene Kopec, Dr. Tom Rice, Dr. Timothy Pringle, also of Owen Sound; Dr. Stephen Brown, of Chesley; Dr. Derek Grundy and his wife, Laurie Grundy, of Hanover; Dr. Andrew Loucks, of Wiarton; and Dr. David Rose, of Thornbury.

I've also heard from registered dental hygienists from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. I want to read some of their comments into the record.

Registered dental hygienist Kim Murray of West Grey wrote: "I've worked for 17 years as a dental hygienist in a progressive dental practice that prides ourselves with treating the high-fear patient. We have always focused on this aspect of dentistry because the dentist's wife is very

fearful. So we have this amazing dentist who gives amazing comfortable services to thousands of clients every year while his wife sits back and is unable to seek dental treatment due to these deeply ingrained fears that only he has been able to calm. This bill must be passed to give back choice to our clients. Thank you."

Another local registered dental hygienist, Michele Walker—no relation, Mr. Speaker: "It should be a patient's right to have the oral health care provider of his or her choice, not restricted by the fact that the practitioner is his or her spouse. Our regulatory body, the College of Dental Hygienists of Ontario, acts to protect the public. The CDHO has the knowledge and understanding of the provider/patient relationship and is fully capable of determining what behaviour is appropriate for our profession in the circumstance of treating a spouse, not the government of Ontario."

Janelle Shouldice, also an RDH, said: "To put it very simply, if I treat my husband in my chair, I risk losing my registration, I will be charged with a hefty fine, and the icing on the cake," I'll be registered "as a sexual offender. That's a harsh outcome. My husband has the right to choose his provider, and as a health care provider, I have the professionalism and tact to treat him as such, a client. As you know, the local dental hygienists are a tight-knit group and are thrilled that someone is finally listening to us."

Barb Snelling, also an RDH from my riding, said: "I am a dental hygienist and I am no longer able to treat my husband as it is considered sexual abuse because he is a client and also my husband. I find this to be ridiculous and would appreciate you considering supporting the bill that will change this."

Currently, Speaker, if a member of a regulated health profession provides care to their spouse, it is automatically considered sexual abuse. The rationale for this bill is to eliminate the default charge of sexual abuse within colleges that have a history of regulation as related to treatment of spouses. This is very specific here, but there are a number of other professions that may choose to adopt—I want to reinforce that it's not mandatory; they will have the ability to choose whether they wish to do this or not. It does benefit rural and northern Ontario significantly, and it does not in any way lessen the zero tolerance policy in regard to sexual abuse.

This is a prime example of three parties being supportive, three parties working together, which is what we all come here as elected representatives to do. It's a way that we can create good legislation, and it exemplifies that we can create good legislation when we work together. I look forward to the passing of Bill 70 to third reading and royal assent, and I hope for much, much more of this in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I rise today to speak further in support of the legislation being debated today. The minister has spoken about how this proposed legislation represents common ground for all the members in this House, and I would like to echo those comments.

I understand that the member for Leeds–Grenville has worked closely with both the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and ministry staff in bringing forward this latest version of this bill. I would like to congratulate the member for getting his proposed legislation this far, and with support of all three parties at second reading. I believe that all of that work and co-operation has resulted in a strong bill that would protect patients, while allowing health regulatory colleges to make the best decisions for patients and the health professionals that they regulate.

I think that all of us understand the unique relationship a health professional has with his or her patients. The health professional's position is one of power but also great responsibility, and the relationship is fundamentally predicated on trust and care. The principle "First do no harm" can be traced all the way back to the late fifth century BC and the founder of western medicine, the Greek physician Hippocrates. To say it has a strong pedigree would understate the matter. It has been central to medical ethics for millennia. When it is violated, that harms patients, their families and the medical profession.

Our government has been strong in its commitment to zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health care professionals. That will not change. But current legislation, in protecting patients from abuse, prohibits treatment of spouses by medical professionals.

I know that some medical professionals and professional associations have been advocating for a change to existing legislation to allow regulatory colleges the flexibility to choose whether their members can treat their spouses. Some health regulatory colleges are supportive of such a change. At the same time, I recognize that other regulatory colleges prefer the status quo, and many Ontarians are justifiably concerned to see that strong patient protections against sexual abuse continue to exist.

The proposed legislation we are considering today attempts—quite successfully, I believe—to satisfy all of those concerns. It would allow health colleges to put forward a regulation that would allow their members to treat their spouses, it will maintain the status quo for colleges that would prefer not to undertake such a change and, above all, it would ensure that all patients, whether or not they are the spouse of a health professional, will receive the same strong protections against abuse.

This is a question that has been taken up in the past. In 2011, the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care asked the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council, or HPRAC, for advice on whether or not alternatives to the current mandatory licence revocation should be made for spousal treatment by health professionals. The minister made it clear that the government would maintain zero tolerance for sexual abuse.

HPRAC is a body which advises the minister on questions surrounding health professions in Ontario. For example, it advises on whether some unregulated professions should be regulated, or whether some regulated professions should be unregulated. It also provides

guidance on possible amendments to the Regulated Health Professions Act, or other matters referred to it by the minister.

Between October 2011 and January 2012, HPRAC conducted a thorough review and in-depth consultations with regulatory colleges, professional associations, experts, organizations, advocates and the public. This included consultation meetings, online feedback and eight town hall sessions in communities across the province. In the end, HPRAC recommended that treatment of spouses should be amended to exempt spouses from the definition of sexual abuse, and that colleges should be permitted to change regulations or standards of practice to prohibit spousal treatment.

HPRAC carefully considered all that it learned through its consultation and review process, and kept the public interest paramount in its recommendations. However, the legislation before the House today differs from those recommendations in at least one crucial way: Under HPRAC's proposal, spousal treatment would be allowed unless a health regulatory college specifically prohibited it. The proposed legislation we are considering today, on the other hand, would maintain the status quo unless a regulatory college chose to allow it through regulation.

In other words, for health regulatory colleges that wish to maintain a prohibition on spousal treatment, this legislation would, if passed, change nothing. On the other hand, it would allow other colleges to decide to allow their members to treat their spouses. I think this is important in recognizing the autonomy of self-regulating health professions. I believe it is consistent with HPRAC's recommendations, while improving upon them.

The minister spoke to the requests by some stakeholders to allow health professionals to treat their spouses in certain situations and when the regulatory colleges deem it appropriate. This is consistent with many other jurisdictions, and it's something that I know a number of the members in this House have heard from stakeholders and individuals in their ridings.

I know that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly also heard from a number of delegates advocating for this change, and I will touch on some of their concerns.

Dr. Rick Caldwell, president of the Ontario Dental Association, emphasized the difficulty for patients in small and isolated towns across Ontario who are forced to travel great distances for treatment because their spouse is a regulated health professional.

For example, Dr. LouAnn Visconti, an orthodontic specialist, is the only resident dental specialist in Timmins. As a result, her husband must travel three and a half hours to receive orthodontic dental care.

Dr. Bob Haig of the Ontario Chiropractic Association told the committee that, before the prohibition, family and spousal treatment was accepted as part of chiropractic medicine.

Certainly some concerns were also expressed. Nicole Pietsch of the Ontario Coalition of Rape Crisis Centres

spoke passionately on behalf of victims of sexual violence. The concerns raised by the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario and the College of Physiotherapists of Ontario focused on specific provisions of the proposed legislation, which I would like to speak to now.

1720

There were some concerns about the definition of the word “spouse.” This is something that has changed in the last incarnation of this proposed legislation, so that the definition of “spouse” that is in the bill is consistent with other existing legislation. It has specific time parameters, a three-year cohabitation period, which is consistent with other Ontario statutes, such as the Family Law Act, Retail Sales Tax Act and Pension Benefits Act. This is worded in such a way as to remove subjectivity as to who may be considered a spouse. We agree that the discipline committees of the respected colleges should not be forced to determine the precise nature of a personal relationship between a health professional and a patient, and so the current definition provides the necessary objectivity.

Concerns were also raised about the provision that would protect the spouses of regulated health professionals during the provision of treatment. This is a very important part of the proposed legislation because it recognizes that spousal patients could also be victims of sexual abuse and it ensures them the right to the same strong protections that all patients in Ontario enjoy. It would also ensure that spousal patients who are the victims of sexual abuse by their health care provider would continue to have access to funding for therapy and counselling.

The legislation includes the terminology “practice of the profession,” which is an established and known terminology that is used by health regulatory colleges. We recognize that each health profession is unique, and this wording gives individual colleges the flexibility to determine what constitutes engaging in the practice of the profession in their particular professional context.

I know that the committee listened closely to what all of the delegations had to say and carefully considered the proposed legislation clause by clause. I would like to thank the members of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly for their work on this bill, as well as all the delegates who brought their experience and expertise to the committee. It is not easy work forging legislation that respects the unique circumstances of different regulated health professions while ensuring universal and equal protections for patients. I believe that this proposed legislation manages to do so very well.

I would like to thank the member for Leeds–Grenville once again for bringing this legislation forward, and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, as well as the many people who have worked on this in her ministry, for all that they have done to help bring it to this point.

I believe that this is strong proposed legislation which respects and empowers health regulatory colleges while protecting all of Ontario’s patients. I will be pleased to support it, and I urge all members to do so as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s indeed my pleasure to stand in support of Bill 70. The member from Leeds–Grenville, Steve Clark, my good friend and a great hockey player—I would say that he and his staff have done a marvellous job of building relationships, navigating this through the system. A private member’s bill that gets this far on an issue that’s been here before and failed is a commendation for the member from Leeds–Grenville. I can say that for sure.

Nothing is ever achieved alone, and I suspect, listening to the remarks this afternoon—I want to commend the members in the gallery for having the patience and persistence to hang in there, because you’re so close to scoring on this issue; the president of the ODA, of course, Rick Caldwell, as well as the staff people I work with, Frank Bevilacqua and Maggie Head. I want to also shout out the Minister of Health. I would say that’s another good example that they’re actually listening. Quite often, we don’t like to give any ground to the government side of the House, but if this is a two-way street where they’re giving our member’s bill, whether it’s the member for Leeds–Grenville or Ernie Hardeman, the member for Oxford, some air and some space, I think that’s the right thing to do and this place could become far more civil for all of us.

I would say, though, just in clarity, everyone has spoken and defined the choices that have been supplied and the options for the consumer and the provider under the regulated health group. It’s important to recognize, beyond that group, that I’ve had letters from, for the most part, dentists, several in my riding. I’ll name them, in fact. The ODHA as well, the hygienists: Margaret Carter, executive director for the Ontario Dental Hygienists’ Association, wrote a very compelling email, and it’s great to see other regulated health professions stepping up to ease the burden on those.

In the interests of sharing my time with the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I’ll skip some of my remarks because they’ve all been mentioned by everyone else.

I think the bill is in line with the recommendations of the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council in its advice to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care in June 2012. I have a copy of the report here, and it makes a couple of very definite recommendations about the interpretation and the role of the college. It’s very important that the college eventually, at the end of the day, has the buy-off. As a profession, we always look to the college to be the regulator and, in fact, the enforcer and disciplinarian. That’s a tough role for the colleges to assume, but that has to be done. Some colleges are dominated by certain groups, but that’s a whole different discussion.

Dental hygiene is the third-largest health care profession in the province. Without this change in policy provided in this bill, a regulated health professional treating his or her spouse would be subject to a manda-

tory revocation of their certificate of registration for a minimum of five years. That's a particularly harsh circumstance. It's something that, years ago, probably had a different connotation to it.

Breaking away, just on the personal side, I want to mention a couple of things. I should mention first of all that my brother-in-law, a very close friend of mine, Dr. Paul Goodman, was a dentist, a dental surgeon—a highly respected, very accomplished individual. He was about my age. Unfortunately, a couple of years ago, through an unfortunate accident, he succumbed and died. It's very sad. My sister has never really recovered.

But also, I would say that in my riding, I'm very familiar with a couple of retired dentists who are good friends of mine: Dr. Chuck Cattran as well as Dr. Gary Kindree. They both at one time or another tried to save my crumbling teeth—and did a fairly good job, I would say.

At the end of that, the real star in my riding is Dr. Jack Cottrell. He's a dentist in my riding, in Port Perry, particularly. He was the president of the Canadian Dental Association in 2005. He's also a former president of the Ontario Dental Association and the Durham Ontario Dental Society. He received the University of Toronto Faculty of Dentistry Award of Distinction in 2011 for his volunteer commitment to Feed the Children and his dedicated leadership in dentistry organizations at the national and international levels. I must thank also thank his lovely wife, Michelle.

Dr. Cottrell has also served on the governing council of the World Dental Federation. He's only the second Canadian ever to hold that post. In fact, he is a great spokesman and marketer, if you will, for the profession itself.

I want you to also recognize some other innovation in my riding, on a slightly different topic—but I'll skip that in the interest of sharing time favourably with other members.

I do want to mention another—I have a bill, Bill 4—to briefly advise the members of my private bill, which attempts to address matters related to health care professions and their immediate families. Bill 4 is entitled the Health Profession Corporations Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. Currently, physicians and dentists are the only health care professionals allowed to create health profession corporations. These health profession corporations are subject to special treatment in respect to the ownership by a dentist's or a physician's family members today. My bill amends both acts—this is important—to give all regulated health professions the authority to create a health profession corporation. These have implications in terms of non-share capital and taxes which, if you wish to contact me—it's important.

I have sent it to most of the colleges for comment. Whether it's veterinarians—but most of the professions in health care have responded, and almost all favourably. Some think it's not within their particular mandate, but Bill 4 would empower all regulated health professions to have the same administrative privileges currently available to only doctors and dentists. I have received many

favourable comments from representatives of regulated health professions who have reviewed Bill 4 and have been much supportive.

I want to return to the real subject of today and the work that has been done collegially in finding consensus. This is a very important statement about this bill, Bill 70. Mr. Clark, in his background, has been shown to find consensus. I would say that this is one more example of the Tim Hudak leadership team moving forward—not to politicize this in any way—and finding consensus. We look to the government party and the third party to find that consensus. That's the only way we can move forward. It can't all be one group sucking all the air out of the room.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Last call: Further debate? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

1730

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm in by the nick of time. I have to get my breath. Maybe I could get some more water, too.

Well, it's a pleasure to join the third reading debate on Bill 70 this afternoon. I want to congratulate my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Clark, for bringing forth this bill as a private member's bill to the Legislature.

I've been here for 10 years now—don't everyone applaud at once.

Applause.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Over that period of time, I've had people who were part of the different bodies of regulated professions raise the issue with me about exemptions for treating one's spouse.

I listened intently to the member from Nickel Belt earlier today. It was long, but oh, my gosh, it was interesting. She talked about how there are some professions where it is almost a certainty that they will not be looking for exemptions, because it would not be logical for an exemption to be sought or granted.

But the group that was the most active over the years, and I give them a tremendous amount of credit, was the Ontario Dental Association. They've been consistent and dogged in raising the question about whether, because of no tolerance to have any kind of relations with a patient, it automatically excluded a member of that profession's spouse. They've raised that issue with me on a consistent basis over the years, that in the mind of the average person it really didn't make sense that they would be prohibited from treating their spouse based on the act that was passed back in 1991.

So I've had this conversation going for a number of years now. Immediately, when it was raised with me, I asked myself the same question. You've got to be kidding. I mean, I wouldn't have known the first thing about the act and the HPRAC before I ever came here. Why would I? What interest would I have had? But when it was raised with me that there's a restriction because of an act, and there's no tolerance, basically a prohibition,

because of an act that was done with good reason, to protect people, that as a result of that—you know the old saying about unforeseen consequences; they were coming back home to roost. There was a need to take another look at this.

I want to congratulate Steve Clark again. I know my colleague from Nickel Belt said it hasn't been an easy process. It hasn't been an easy process, but because of the audience today—I know we have members of other health professions, other than the dental, but they've been the primary ones that we have had conversations with.

I mean, getting this through to this point has been about as much fun as a root canal. It has not been easy. It has been an arduous process. There have been fits and starts, and then, with the prorogation last year—there seemed to have been a great deal of progress. There was what we thought was an informal agreement that this was going to be part of a programming motion in the spring and—yada yada yada—here we are in the fall. But thank goodness the three parties agreed that here in the fall we would move on granting this exemption.

Bill 70, I think, speaks to it very well. As my colleague from Leeds–Grenville made very clear, too, where there are breaches, people will feel the full effect of the law. Where there are breaches, people will feel it, but we shouldn't restrict them on the basis of a law that really never made sense in the first place.

I do want to speak a little about dental itself. I know my colleague from Nickel Belt spoke extensively about the importance of dental care, and I think it's probably the most overlooked part of our health care system for very many people. Before I came here, I happened to be reading an article one time—I can't remember the magazine, but it talked about how with many significant illnesses and diseases dentistry and proper oral care would act as an early warning system in preventing greater health tragedies or death itself. This was an extensive article and I was shocked when I read it. I remember speaking to my wife about it and saying, "Holy"—no, I said, "You know, we've always been pretty good about making sure we take good care of our teeth, but it's even more important now because it's been confirmed that taking care of your teeth and good oral health are paramount to good overall health." Some people might think, "Well, why would you worry about your chest cavity from your mouth?" Your heart and your lungs. Well, it's all connected. We're one body and we have to ensure that all parts are working collectively and cooperatively.

The dental profession has been extremely good about spreading that message. I want to thank members of the ODA from my riding, who have spoken to me extensively. Originally, Dr. Bill MacPhee, who was incidentally my dentist for many years as well; Dr. Bruce Harle; but over the last number of years, Dr. Kevin Roach, who has been pushing not only this issue, but other issues of dental health as my representative on the ODA and has been dogged in ensuring that I'm getting the message loud and clear. I can assure you, Kevin, if you're

listening out there, we are getting the message loud and clear, and you're doing a great job in delivering it.

I'm just very pleased to be here today with my colleague Steve Clark and colleagues on all sides of the House, where I think we've made tremendous progress, and at the end of the day we're going to pass a bill that makes a whole lot of sense.

The only negative thing I can say is, what took us so long? But having said that, better late than never. I will be happy to vote in favour of this bill and look forward to its passage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate on Bill 70 this afternoon. Let me start by paying tribute to Mr. Clark, the member for Leeds–Grenville. I think he has done a super job in bringing this forward on a number of occasions.

I think most members around the House would agree that the underpinnings of this bill are very sound; it's something that I think we can all agree makes a lot of sense. I think it's been brought forward in a way that it has improved every step of the way along. I note that the member has worked with the ministry to ensure that the bill was improved along the way and that it met the interests of all stakeholders, because we know that what we want to do for sure is we want to be a government and we want to, I think, have parties in the House as well—all three parties in the House—that have a commitment to protecting Ontario's patients in all the health professions.

We know that these people that engage in the health professions hold a very important position of trust with those patients, and we know that those colleges and those professions themselves also have a zero tolerance for sexual abuse of patients by health professionals. But we understand that there was a need to make some changes or to make an amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, and this spousal exemption that's being proposed today, I think, makes an awful lot of sense.

I've had the same dentist for over 30 years, Dr. Paul Eisner in Oakville. When we started together, I was a young patient and he was a young dentist. Now I'm an old patient and he's an old dentist, but we still get along very well. He puts things in my mouth and tells me jokes for about 30 minutes and makes me listen to them, and somehow at the end of it all, I come out with better teeth. Of course, I write a cheque on the way out. But we've had a wonderful relationship and I appreciate that relationship.

But I think everybody has conducted themselves in a way that we should all be proud of this. This is the way that I think all three parties can work together. This comes from a member of the opposition who has worked very, very hard at ensuring that this bill meets the needs of everybody. I think it's worthy of support of all members of the House. I look forward to supporting this and urge my colleagues to support it as well. Once again, my thanks, particularly to Maggie Head from the ODA—it's good to see her back in the walls of Queen's Park

again—and all those from the ODA and from the other regulated health professions as well who worked to make sure that this act works for everybody.

1740

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 70, the Regulated Health Professions Amendment Act. I'm also very excited to see such a great turnout—members of the Ontario Dental Association and their spouses.

I also would like to commend the member from Leeds–Grenville for his steadfast commitment to this issue. He previously introduced legislation to provide a spousal exception during the previous session. Sadly, Liberal Party interests were placed above the interests of Ontario's health care providers and Dalton McGuinty prorogued the Legislature to avoid accountability. That killed a lot of good bills. I had a good bill in there too, by the way, about red tape. Thankfully, the member from Leeds–Grenville truly cares for the interests of health care providers and he introduced Bill 70 back in May.

This issue is one that many Ontarians may not be aware of but is one that has a definite impact on the people around the province. Currently, if a member of a regulated health profession provides care to their spouse it is automatically considered sexual abuse. As a result, they're subject to a mandatory revocation of their certificate of registration for a minimum of five years—unbelievable. No one in their right mind would consider it inappropriate if a denturist were to fit their spouse for dentures or an optician fit their spouse for glasses, but under current legislation it is, by default, considered sexual abuse.

Bill 70 would inject some common sense into this issue. This amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act would leave it up to the regulatory college of a particular health profession to determine if the treatment of a spouse is appropriate or not. The regulatory councils that will be making these decisions are comprised of both members of the public and health professionals, which makes it the ideal body to decide what constitutes professional misconduct.

In June 2012, the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council advised the Ministry of Health to address the issue of treatment of spouses. They quite rightly pointed out that “spousal, health professional-patient relationships are different from non-spousal, health professional-patient relationships.”

They further noted, “Health professions’ disciplinary committees, as well as courts of law, have confirmed the difficulty in being able to consider facts or circumstances ... in the face of the mandatory revocation provisions.”

Surely, disciplinary committees or courts should be able to consider circumstances instead of being forced to suspend a health care professional for providing appropriate care to their spouse.

The passage of Bill 70, which will clean up the rules, allows our province's health professionals to treat their

spouses if their college deems it appropriate. By no means does this bill relax the rules on sexual abuse. Those who commit sexual abuse will be met with the full force of the law. It is an issue that health care providers and we, as legislators, take very seriously.

The passing of Bill 70 will help rural and northern Ontarians who often cannot find a health care provider. In many areas, there may be only one health care provider in the region for a particular profession.

In my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex, we know this problem all too well. Many of my constituents have a tough time finding a family doctor or a dentist or an optometrist. We should be doing all that we can to ensure that all of our constituents have access to health care. As it stands today, many spouses are unable to receive care because of the outdated rules regarding spousal treatment.

By looking at this issue with a common sense approach on a case-by-case basis instead of with a blanket policy, we can make it easier for people across this province to receive health care. At the same time, clarifying the rules will allow colleges of each health profession to focus on real cases of sexual abuse in an effort to protect the public.

Speaker, passing Bill 70 is simply the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to rise in the chamber. I want to thank all members here today debating third reading of Bill 70 for actually accomplishing what we come here to do and what the people of this great province expect us to do, and that is bring forward legislation that just makes sense. When we work collaboratively, we actually do accomplish things that are going to be more progressive and bring us out of outdated legislation.

I want to also acknowledge my esteemed colleague from Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Clark, for taking the initiative on this bill. He has done a wonderful thing, working with the ODA and the various doctors and their spouses who are here today in support of Bill 70.

Coming from rural Ontario—I think the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Mr. Walker, touched on it—there are instances throughout the province, rural Ontario, Mr. Speaker, where the doctor in question is the only sheriff in town, if you will, and because of this previous legislation, has not been able to work on their spouse.

I think this is a great step forward. I think this is an initiative that, again, collaboratively, all three parties have supported. There's other legislation on the docket that actually could be brought forward as well that I think all three parties could definitely work together on. My private member's bill, Bill 98, for instance—the importation of wines, beer and spirits—would be another prime example of bringing forward legislation that actually is going to speed up our economy and be helpful when it comes to building Ontario once again.

Mr. Speaker, when I think of my personal trips to Dr. Paolo Giuliani, my dentist in Campbellford, Ontario—

home of Dooher's Bakery. I know Mr. Leal from Peterborough has been to Dooher's, I'm sure, when he traverses down into Campbellford—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Perfect doughnuts, great doughnuts—voted the best bakery in all of Northumberland. As you can tell, Mr. Speaker, I may have had one or two myself.

Interjections.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's true. But, Mr. Speaker, you know—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, folks, it's so loud in here I can't even hear him. Last warning: Next person that gets out of hand is gone.

Continue.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to be able to hear myself think when I'm here in the chamber.

Interjection.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thinking and speaking.

But Dr. Giuliani, who actually was just here earlier this week fitting us for our mouthguards, has grave concerns over this. Obviously he has asked for my support, and I am definitely going to be supporting Bill 70. It's a great initiative, and I know for a fact that this is, again, something that we can find some common ground on. I know that when it went to committee we ironed out a few of the bumps that needed to happen. But that's the process when you get to the committee.

So thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank Steve Clark again.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew, further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, I'm done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Oh, I wondered. You were talking.

Further debate? Last call, further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Clark has moved third reading of Bill 70, An Act to amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Orders of the day? Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, noting the lateness of the hour, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1751.

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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 24 October 2013

Jeudi 24 octobre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Thursday 24 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 24 octobre 2013

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WASTE REDUCTION ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RÉDUCTION DES DÉCHETS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 22, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 91, An Act to establish a new regime for the reduction, reuse and recycling of waste and to repeal the Waste Diversion Act, 2002 / *Projet de loi 91, Loi créant un nouveau cadre pour la réduction, la réutilisation et le recyclage des déchets et abrogeant la Loi de 2002 sur le réacheminement des déchets.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm glad to be talking about waste reduction, Bill 91, this morning, but I think I've got to find a way to stop wasting time when I'm running around from area to area. I was just rushing in this morning from an early-morning meeting, and it's amazing how fast you can run when you have to be on time to talk about this bill. But I'm glad to join the debate this morning, Mr. Speaker, and I'll try not to be late for the prayer next time.

I'm pleased to stand today with one of the final remarks during the second reading of Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013. It's important to recognize that this is a substantial bill, a bill that affects each and every Ontarian in their daily lives. We must move forward with the protection of our environment, and a major part of that is reducing our waste and creating a strategy to properly manage it.

Regardless of how much time is spent talking about this, now is the time to act, especially when we are in a province that sits last among the rest in the country in terms of achieving their waste diversion goals. We cannot wait any longer; our environment is constantly at risk, and now—not soon; now—is the time to do something, to proceed and to move forward.

I am happy to see some of the following aspects included in Bill 91. This bill sets diversion targets and enforceable standards for producers to meet. This is extremely important. By creating a Waste Reduction Authority, we

can properly enforce waste reduction activities. This bill allows municipalities to register with the WRA, which will require waste producers to pay municipalities for the collection and recycling of designated materials.

Although municipalities can negotiate the fee paid by waste producers, this could pose challenges for many municipalities in rural areas and northern communities. As distances between residences in rural areas are farther, road conditions are more challenging and weather can be more severe, I am left to wonder whether the costs and fees associated with this bill will be higher for those living in rural areas.

It is good that this bill considers disposal bans, which can be effective tools for preventing recycling materials from going to landfills. These kinds of tools have been used in places like BC and Nova Scotia. All British Columbia regional districts have banned toxic materials from landfills, and as more recycling options become available, more items are being restricted. Metro Vancouver introduced new landfill bans in January 2008 that cover all curbside recyclables and all products covered by a provincial stewardship program as a means to significantly reduce the waste entering regional landfills. They are years ahead of us, Mr. Speaker.

This has proven successful for other provinces, and we can hope for the same here at home. In 2004, the Liberal Minister of the Environment announced that the government's intention was to develop a strategy for Ontario that would divert 60% of the province's waste from disposal by 2008. That was in 2004, nine years ago—nine years ago, Mr. Speaker.

The bill has the potential to increase diversion rates by setting strong, material-specific targets for recycling and diversion. The bill expands on the industrial/commercial/institutional sector, which is very much welcome as the sector is mired with very low recycling rates at 13%.

It is important to acknowledge the municipal role: the significant infrastructure investments in waste collection over the years and the efficiency municipalities have shown as collectors of waste.

The bill still has a way to go. It has the potential and is well intentioned when it talks about the potential to increase targets for diversion rates by setting strong, specific targets. But what are those targets? They are uncertain over what the targets will be and what the time frame is. We need to have a plan. We need clearly outlined targets and a clearly outlined time frame. We need to set a goal, and we need to put the steps and timelines in place to start achieving these goals.

What happened to the goal of zero waste? In the past, this government has touted a zero-waste plan. However, Bill 91 does not mention the aim of achieving zero waste: the goal of protecting the environment and the goal of protecting human health. Like many here, we are not too old to forget the old grade school teachings of the three Rs. The bill doesn't recognize the importance of the three Rs: reduce, reuse, recycle. It fails to encourage reuse, such as a refillable deposit return container system, over recycling. A look across the country shows that provinces with a deposit return system have higher rates than those without.

However, these positive aspects of the bill continue to be Toronto-centric and urban-centric. What is the plan for rural communities, I beg to ask? Where do the needs of rural communities show up in this bill? How are they addressed? How are we going to support rural communities to divert waste? How will we ensure that producers of waste will take responsibility for waste diversion in northern communities?

People get upset if they can't put something into their blue bin that they think should be recycled. They'll call the city and complain; they'll call the municipality and complain; they'll raise the issue with city councillors. I believe that people take these actions and initiatives because they want to protect our environment, and now they want to protect it for future generations.

However, this mentality—the idea that people can call their city councillors to talk about waste management processes—doesn't apply for Ontarians in rural areas. Residents in rural areas don't have blue bins. Many communities are just beginning to develop waste management facilities to incorporate and include recycling as part of their waste management strategy. Believe it or not, Mr. Speaker, people in many rural areas—some of them—are still disposing of their garbage by burning it in their backyards.

While this bill excludes burning waste from waste diversion programs, the legal impacts of this provision are unclear. The bill also places limitations on the burning of waste for energy. The three main problems with incineration are that it is a very inefficient use of end products; it has potentially negative health and environmental effects; and it locks municipalities into contracts that require them to secure a guaranteed waste stream for years to come, which runs counter to the goal of moving towards a zero-waste province.

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This bill does include a provision for all-in pricing, which will help consumers avoid confusion. This will also ensure that environmental costs of products are not passed on to municipalities and taxpayers.

While people in Ontario do not necessarily spend hours of their day at this point thinking about what the provincial government is going to do to promote waste reduction, we have a job to do: to create laws and to create good policy. We have a job to ensure that policy we are putting forward is good policy that encourages waste reduction and also ensure that we are creating the

framework for better policies to protect our environment for my children, your children and those to come.

I'm pleased to have had the opportunity to voice my concerns in regard to this bill. It is a good step moving forward, but again I need to stress the point that in northern and rural communities a lot of these communities are finding it very challenging to obtain the resources and to come to the agreements. A lot of us are very well-connected between those communities—it's to find a streamline and a balance in regard to the cost. As I said in my comments earlier, many—even our children—want to participate in waste reduction. We know the importance of doing this. We see that our landfills are diminishing year after year. The challenges are coming. But in northern Ontario and rural communities, we do not have the luxury of having all of this available to us and all of those resources. So I'm looking forward to having those discussions, and I'm pleased that you were here this morning to listen to the comments that I had. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening attentively to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, with his attempt to recover from his run up the stairs. I think he made some very valid and insightful points in terms of the challenges and the reality of waste diversion in Ontario. There's no doubt that we have ongoing challenges, and this is an attempt, this bill, to try to meet some of these challenges.

I know that there is a reality difference between rural and urban Ontario in terms of waste diversion. He's so right; there are special challenges in the north that we need to address to make them able to do their waste diversion.

I know that in Toronto one of the things that has worked—almost accidentally—in terms of waste diversion is that for about a decade our blue boxes in Toronto were filled with wine and booze bottles. It seemed that all the glass that was coming from the blue box was in these bottles, and they were contaminating the waste stream. Then there was a change that allowed the Beer Stores to collect wine and beer bottles.

When that change was made, almost without any government intervention whatsoever, except that small change allowing the Beer Stores to participate, we had—overnight, almost—all of the beer bottles, wine bottles and booze bottles gone. Almost overnight they disappeared, because what was happening was that people in Toronto saw an opportunity, basically, to return those bottles and get a refund at the Beer Store for each bottle. So individuals who perhaps had a hard time finding a job or were essentially living on the margins, every day in Toronto when the blue boxes are out, are going door to door, taking the wine and liquor bottles out of the blue boxes and returning them.

The Beer Stores have almost become recycling stores. There are more people in there, I think, recycling bottles and getting a return than there are buying beer, most

times I've been there. So that has helped, and that was just one of the almost unintended consequences.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to listen to the member and the perspective from Algoma-Manitoulin, because he does effectively represent the interests and perspective of his riding.

I generally agree with his theme; definitely, you can't throw the whole baby out with the bathwater here. But our critic on this and his staff, Shane Buckingham and others who have worked on it—the member from Kitchener-Conestoga, Mr. Harris—have done a phenomenal job of dissecting this Bill 91, which is really a bit of a shell, technically. That's the real disappointment here. Really, the evidence is before all of us. For instance, the member said that the largest amount of the waste stream is the ICI sector, the industrial-commercial sector; in fact, it's 50% of all the waste. There are solutions for that stream on the waste stream. But really, what's the performance of the government after 10 years? Well, I think they were at the 20% level of recycling ICI waste. What is it today? It's 12%. The measure of the laudable goal of zero waste—that's very laudable, but let's measure the outcome after 10 years. How is it working, all this action, or lack of it? You see it right across the spectrum on this file, and now we're seeing it on the energy file. It's just tragic. They've ruined the entire file. Now we're paying more and using less. Do you understand? Because we can't afford it.

I want to stay on topic here, because I think there are a couple of parts in the bill that he had mentioned. He mentioned the all-in costing. Well, what's happening to the consumer? You're not going to know what it costs. It's going to be more, though; it's going to be buried in the price. So there's no accountability, no transparency now. That's the deal. This is just another barrier to the consumer, and he said he doesn't want to pass it on to the consumer. It's not going to be a tax anymore, but it's in the price, which is a tax. It's tragic, what they're doing here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to speak in this House, particularly to follow on the comments of the member from Algoma-Manitoulin regarding the waste diversion act. As always, he puts a lot of focus on his riding and the problems that people in his riding will face. I always like to be able to follow him, because his riding and my riding have a lot of similarities. A lot of the things about waste diversion and waste reduction don't work in a sparsely populated area. There's even a difference between rural southern Ontario and northern Ontario. The population is completely, completely different.

We do need to do something. Something comes to mind: Before I came to this place, a long time ago, we were involved in a big fight about a landfill, the Adams mine landfill in northern Ontario. We spent a lot of time at consultation hearings talking about the numbers for

waste reduction. This was a long time ago—10, 15 years ago—and the numbers haven't changed. So, obviously, something has to be done. I think all three parties can agree something has to be done. There are obviously very big differences of opinion on what has to be done.

The one thing in this bill that bothers us considerably is the creation of a waste management authority which is unaccountable. It's a step removed, again, from this Legislature; it's not accountable to the Auditor General. Why are we doing this again? We know the problems that this House has encountered, that that government has encountered, by creating third-party unaccountable quasi-government organizations. Why are we doing this again?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: It was a pleasure to hear the member from Algoma-Manitoulin recover from his run up the stairs and speak very eloquently about the concerns in his riding with recycling and waste. I was also pleased to hear from the member from Durham, who said we shouldn't be throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I want to go on in that theme a bit. In Ottawa and Ottawa South we have a green box program which we just started about two years ago. It's meeting some success right now. We went to—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: There we go. We went to biweekly garbage pickup now. People are saying, "It's not going to work. We shouldn't be doing this. There are all sorts of reasons why we shouldn't be moving forward with this." The program is gaining in success.

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What this bill does—it doesn't speak to the green box program, but it speaks to the blue box program, which enables municipalities to have a more stable stream of funding and control over their blue box and less burden on the municipal taxpayer. As well, the bill clearly defines what the roles are of each level of government and producers and municipalities.

Again, I agree with the member from Durham. We shouldn't throw the baby out with the bathwater. We all agree that this is something we need to do; we need to move forward. Will we need to do other things, like we do in many social endeavours we take forward as a government and as a legislative body? Yes, of course.

I'm glad to speak in support of Bill 91.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My apologies. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, a two-minute response.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Were you running into the House, too?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): It's been a long week.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's been a long week for all of us. Actually, I started my day on the right foot, and it's going to be a very long day.

To the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, I'm pleased to hear that you understand the realities of the challenges between rural and urban. You talked a lot about the collection of beer bottles and wine bottles. We have a different collection in my area. A lot of those collections are done for fundraising. People actually keep their beer bottles at home—keep all of that at home—because at the end of the month or every other fundraising opportunity, every organization—they schedule themselves to go around the small communities in order to fundraise for their activities. That's one of our ways of diverting waste and getting fundraising for them. I'm glad that what's happening in your area works for you, but for us, it's a little bit different. We use it in a different way.

The member from Durham said some very good words, and there's a lot of them that we can actually agree on—you know, the transparency and accountability of this government. You're absolutely right: There are things we can agree on. But you can't discount taking a step forward. This is something that, yes, is moving a step forward, and it is going to help. It's not going to cure everything and we have to work at it, but you can't just say no and not move forward on the issues. You have to take that step forward and be willing to take that step forward.

The member from Timiskaming—Cochrane has championed a lot of issues in his area, and I always enjoy sitting at the table when we're in caucus and having a lot of our discussions, because that's essentially what we, from small northern Ontario communities, always bring forward to discussions and the debate.

To the member from Ottawa South, I'm glad that the green box program is working for you, because you have the capacity. The biggest challenge we have in northern Ontario is that we don't have that capacity yet. We need to structure a way where we can connect all of our communities, address the question about distances between those communities and then we'll move with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to Bill 91, and I would like to start off by saying that unfortunately our party will not be able to support this bill because it's not quite right.

I would like to point out what the shortcomings of this bill are. It really doesn't change anything at Waste Diversion Ontario; it just gives it a new name. It creates new, bigger taxes, and it creates more bureaucracy with garbage police, and they're unaccountable.

We know, from the history of unaccountable agencies in the province of Ontario, that when we set them up, we invite corruption. We expect troubles, and we get them. If we create the potential for agencies that are unaccountable to do something wrong, that situation invariably does happen sooner or later.

We have big charges for eco taxes. A John Deere combine would pay \$823.20 as an eco tax fee to dispose of used tires. In Quebec, that same fee would be zero dollars, and in Manitoba, it would be \$24. That's a

penalty for business people in Ontario. It puts us at an economic disadvantage with our neighbours, and that's something we should not do. When we create an eco tax like that, what we are saying to the people of Ontario is, "We don't trust you to do the right thing, so we're going to penalize you with a tax and a fee."

This bureaucracy, the Waste Reduction Authority, starts with a registrar who will have a list of producers. He will hire or have in place deputies who will help put in place this list. There will be inspectors, who will basically be garbage cops, and they'll have the ability to fine people for not doing the right thing. So there's more of that penalty, that idea that we don't trust people to do the right thing, taking people's freedoms away. That's very undemocratic, and we should not be doing that.

What we should be doing, the PC Party would say—oh, and one other thing that's wrong with this is that there's a tribunal to appeal wrongful decisions, but basically you're appealing to the people who hurt you in the first place. We know, from practice in other organizations, that just does not work, so we cannot do that. That's an unworkable thing.

This organization is exempt from the freedom-of-information act, which kind of flies in the face of everything we stand for: openness and accountability. The Auditor General cannot be approached unless the minister agrees that it's a good and proper thing to do. Those two actions right there remove oversight and remove accountability. They protect an organization that has police powers to lay fines, from oversight and scrutiny of the people of Ontario, even the minister.

What we should be doing, and what the PC Party would recommend, is that the Ministry of the Environment take responsibility for overseeing the recycling of garbage. In this case, it's just 3% of the total garbage stream, so it's only a very small percentage of our total garbage: used tires, electronic devices like televisions, and household hazardous waste like paints and cleaners.

We would have no taxes. There's no need for taxes. We would trust people and encourage people to do the right thing. The Ministry of the Environment—

Interjection.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Well, we have to trust the Ontario people, because they are good people, Mr. Speaker, and they deserve our trust. Certainly, they'll get that from this party.

We will set targets for recycling, we will establish environmental standards and we will monitor how the process goes. That will be the Ministry of the Environment, and that's how it should be done.

We have seen in the past, when we have set up an agency like this that has no oversight and accountability—such as the OSPCA, which is a charity that has police powers and what they do to people. Steve Straub in Vienna, Ontario, had his animals seized, and he got a bill for \$167,000. Surely that's abuse of power and authority. The appeal process was with the same people who took his animals and took him to court, and we don't want that to happen to any other people. Surely, if we set

up a body like the Waste Reduction Authority, that has police cops and no oversight and accountability, these kinds of things can happen.

I would like to digress a little bit, Mr. Speaker. It's not really a digression but a broadening of the subject, because we're only talking about 3% of the garbage, and I think we can't do that, really. We have to look at the whole ball of wax. We have to look at 100% of garbage and how—as a people—in the long term, garbage should be managed in Ontario.

We had a committee in my riding. In my riding, we have the Carp dump, which is the largest dump in Ottawa. It's full, and the waste management company that owns and operates it has applied for a second landfill beside the first. Recently, about a month ago, their environmental assessment was approved for the potential building of this dump, and the Minister of the Environment did a very good job on that, so my hat is off to him on that point. That's positive news, sir.

So that subject of waste management is a very hot topic in my riding. We had some people, after the last election, who came up to me and said, "Why don't we strike a committee of six people"—there were six of us—"to talk about what we do with garbage in the long term in the province of Ontario?"

We decided that, first of all, we should take the attitude that it's our garbage; it's our responsibility. Because it's our garbage, and it's our responsibility to dispose of it, we should also dispose of it in our community, because to put it on a truck and send it to our neighbour, whether that be New York or wherever, is basically irresponsible. That was the first thing.

We should also take a look at ICI garbage and assume that is our garbage as well, because the only reason the industries, commercials and institutions are producing a good or a service is because we want that good or service. And as a result of producing that good or service, there is garbage produced. Therefore, it is our garbage. That would simplify the garbage process, because now all garbage would be in one class, not two, as we currently have, which confuses and complicates the business of the disposing of garbage.

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Beyond that, we would go one step further. We have the three Rs, as was mentioned earlier by the previous speaker: reduce, reuse, recycle. I would suggest we should add a fourth R, and that would be recovery. Recovery would be incineration. Basically, the recovery part is where we incinerate the garbage and recover the benefit in energy, which could be used to produce electricity or heat that could be used in various ways.

In the town of Brampton they've had an incinerator for 25 years, right in the town. It works well. I talked to Peter Robertson, the former mayor of Brampton, and he was very proud of how well this privately owned and privately operated incinerator worked. They burn garbage, they produce electricity, they pipe steam across the street to a cardboard manufacturing plant. They make cardboard, pipe the hot water back, and it's recycled through

the incinerator. Europe has been effectively using incinerators for probably 50 years. They're usually in cities. They burn clean, they burn well, they do the job. It gets rid of the garbage.

Here in Ontario we can't mandate incineration, but we should encourage it, as government, as a choice to municipalities—it would be the choice of municipalities. Recently, the region of Durham, after years of process and millions of dollars—seven or eight years, I think it was, and \$14 million—got approval to build an incinerator, and they are in the process of building it as we speak along Highway 401 in Bowmanville.

I met with those people. What a proud and wonderful group of individuals: Roger Anderson, chair of the region; his team of engineers, led by Mirka Januszkiewicz, who is the engineer. She's a lady who is so enthused in what they were doing. The whole group was so enthused with what they're doing. They're doing the recycling, the composting and the incineration, because they committed that there would be no landfill in their community in 1999, and now in 2013 or 2014, their incinerator will be up and be built. They tendered it and did a wonderful process of choosing the best advice they could find in the market. There are four or five companies in North America that produce working, proven incinerators, and they chose one of them. It's an exciting process.

I believe that would better address how to manage garbage: We take the attitude that we own it, we're responsible for it. We encourage incineration, which reduces the need for landfills. In smaller rural communities, incineration is not an option; it's expensive, but it should be something we very much encourage. Our group of people came up with this plan, which I think is wonderful; we're quite excited about it. The Durham folks were inspiring, and they've started the ball rolling again after 25 years. Environmentalists with false information stopped the idea of considering incineration in the province of Ontario, which was a 25-year setback in time, I would say. Now the ball is rolling again.

I think we need to embrace that as the future: the four Rs, the responsibility and incineration as the way to go along with recycling of all kinds. More than just 3%, Mr. Speaker. This is a 3% solution; we're looking for a 100% solution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's rather interesting to see that the goals are good. We all want to go there. We all want to go to a place where people will reuse, will reduce, will recycle and, sure, they will take responsibility. But the road to get there doesn't seem to be as straightforward as one would think.

Ontario is a huge province that has very different cities and towns. I represent 33 little communities. Not one of them is big enough to be a town or a city or anything of the sort. But the people who live in Nickel Belt, they want to participate. They want to recycle. They want to be part of the 100% solution, like the member was just talking about. But it will take a different form, depending on where you live.

At the end of the day, I would say the people of Ontario are hungry for this. The people of Ontario want it to happen. If you go into any one of our schools, if you talk to the youth, they get it. They want to participate, and they're a captive audience of people who would love it more if only the infrastructure was in place for them to do this, if only in little communities like the ones I represent, whether it be Shining Tree or Westree or Mattagami or Ivanhoe Lake or Foleyet or Sultan or any of the 33 beautiful communities that I represent. So far, their opportunity to recycle is non-existent. We have to do better. We have to find a way where the path to 100% will happen no matter where you live in this province. The resolve to go there seems to be shared by all three parties. The route to get there I don't think is as clear as it needs to be. By continuing dialogue, I hope we will get there.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to comment on the member's speech as well. Look, the reality is that the Waste Diversion Act that was passed in 2002 was a good attempt to increase recycling in this province. It simply hasn't worked. We're doing a good job with respect to household recycling. People are firm users of the blue box, the grey box program and also, to a certain extent, the green bin program. But when it comes to industrial waste, we're simply not doing enough. I believe it's only at about 12% or 13% right now.

What this bill is really all about—and Speaker, we've had eight hours of debate of this. If we all agree that this is the way to go, that we're going in the right direction, let's get it to committee, let's get the bill back, make some amendments to it and get on with it. The fundamental aspect of this bill is twofold. Number one, it gives the government much greater control over the total recycling industry that's out there currently. We've basically left it up to the private sector, by and large, and quite frankly it hasn't worked to the extent that it should. Secondly, we are making producers responsible for the cost of the final disposition of the product once the product is at the end of its life cycle. You know, when a product is built, it has labour costs and it has material costs. It should also have the end-of-life-cycle recycling costs, reutilization costs or whatever built into it. That's what this bill is really all about.

Let's get on with it. We cannot continue to dump all of our problems in dumps, landfills or whatever we call them. All we're doing is we're just leaving a much greater cleanup bill for future generations. We simply cannot allow that to happen. Let's pass this bill, let's get on with it and let's get a better recycling system in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The Attorney General is certainly making more than is necessary out of this. The importance of people democratically having the right to debate is—we should be careful treading on that.

But I do, out of respect for the Minister of Environment, who is here—he's in pain, I can tell, and it's not particularly from this bill, so I won't be harsh on him this morning. I know if the member from Kitchener-Conestoga was here it would be a different game. He would be holding his feet to the fire, so to speak. But because his knee is in such bad shape I won't twist on him.

I would say this, though: I did listen to some of the comments from people within the community of the environmental watchdog groups. The Ontario Waste Management Association sent me a letter, and in it they said: "Over the last two decades, we have struggled to make progress on waste diversion. The overall recycling rate in Ontario has remained relatively stagnant, at under 25%." We know as well, the recycling part of ICI waste has gone down, from 20% to 12% being recycled. They've had 10 years. It's worse. That's the measurement; that's the report card. They had a C and now they have a D minus. They basically have failed.

Now, what they're doing with this bill is really kind of a shell game. The people of Ontario—and I'm speaking directly to you, because this is affecting you. Right at the curbside, you're going to be paying for what's in that box when you bought the bottle of Javex or the bottle of soap or whatever; it's going to be in the price. They're just hiding the tax so you won't know what it's costing you. It's shameful.

The other day, the Premier talked about openness and transparency. Oh, it saddens me, the duplicity of it all. I don't want to be too dramatic, but nonetheless I would say that the truth is in the actions that we have heard today. I do believe in the three Rs. We have a plan, and I can tell you the plan has been well developed by Michael Harris and his staff—Shane Buckingham and others, and Rebecca. It says here—I have no time to put those remarks on the record, though.

0940

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to be able to stand up and talk about the waste diversion act, and to comment on some of the comments from the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills. Again, he also focuses on his riding, on the people in his riding, and I share some—especially with the rural, agricultural part.

He brought up the tire issue, and I don't think there's anyone, small business or consumer, who doesn't want to recycle, and who doesn't know it has to be paid for somehow. The problem with a lot of these things is that they are unsure of the accountability of these programs and if they are actually getting value for their dollar in these programs.

When the price of recycling for tires for agriculture went very high, it left a feeling of, "Okay, well, where are they getting these numbers from? Are they just picking them out of thin air, or is it actually the cost of doing this?"

I remember when the eco fees came in. I went to my local tractor dealership, and I bought all my—it was the

springtime; I bought all my oil filters to change all the oil in my tractors, and there was \$48 or \$50 tacked on for the eco fees. I said, "Oh, cool. So you mean"—now I'm paying \$3 a filter—"when I take the filters off, I can bring them back and they'll be recycled? I don't mind, actually, paying the \$3 for that." No, no, no. That money just goes. You still have to take them to the landfill in northern Ontario.

Well, that's the problem. If we can actually get accountability into this, I don't mind. I didn't mind. Maybe I'm different, but I didn't mind paying a couple of bucks to recycle this oil filter, if it's actually going to happen. But it hasn't happened, and that's what we have to focus on: making it happen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Carleton-Mississippi Mills, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to thank the members for their comments—from Nickel Belt, the Attorney General, from Durham and from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

It's a subject we all have a keen interest in, but we don't need to be taxing people to get them to do the right thing. We need to be going to the private sector and creating a bureaucracy that would encourage them to participate in the marketplace in recycling and getting the financial benefit from the marketplace.

I was at a reception last night, speaking to a man from Lafarge cement. They need fuel to create heat to make cement. They burn coal, because it's the cheapest. They love taking recycled materials that are flammable, like wood, and they would take tires. A few years ago, they had an approval from the MOE to do tires; the environmental lobby groups got to the Ministry of the Environment, and that ended right away.

That was unfortunate. That was a negative setback for the recycling of garbage, for the positive economic consumption of garbage. Used tires would have been put to a good use. They burn them clean, because they have the technology. That's the kind of thing we need to be doing. That's recycling—or recovery, actually; that's the fourth R that I talked about.

I do believe we need to change our attitudes and take responsibility for garbage. We need to not, as a government, be penalizing with taxes, fees and garbage cops. I think we need to be creating that environment for the private sector to want to recycle, to create an environment where they can take advantage of the marketplace and make a profit from recycling. I don't think we should be forcing anybody to pay for and be penalized, taxed and fined if they're not recycling the way the government says they should. The marketplace will take care of that, and recovery is part of that marketplace, because if we can't find a way to recycle it, we can burn it and create energy and heat and use it that way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to join the debate. I am quite happy with the kinds of questions, comments and

remarks that members of this Legislature have made on Bill 91, the waste diversion act. It's a very, I think, important debate, because it touches at the—we're entering the Christmas season, and I know that a lot of retailers in the province of Ontario are in the midst of putting together their displays and their advertisements to entice shoppers to shop in their communities.

I know that certainly the government and all leaders of each party in this Legislature have made a pitch for Ontarians to shop within their neighbourhoods and to buy locally. Certainly the whole campaign Shop the Neighbourhood was launched this week with the intent of getting Ontario consumers to buy things in their local communities. They know, of course, that big sales are going to be happening with Black Friday in the United States, where items that might be consumed around the holiday season are going to be at a significant discount, and folks from Ontario who do not live too far away from the United States border have a tendency to book shopping trips around that time to take advantage of cheaper products.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when we look at the waste diversion bill, we have to acknowledge that part of what's going to happen if this bill is instituted is the cost of goods in the province of Ontario will simply be going up. I know that the Premier, earlier this week, suggested that the high dollar was one of the culprits that are enticing Ontario consumers to choose to buy in the United States where products are at a significant discount and the dollar, at near parity, allows them to go to the United States to purchase these items at a lower rate.

Well, I believe, with the institution of the waste diversion act, where we're removing eco fees on the receipt and placing them in the purchase price—is further going to drive the cost of those products higher, and at the end of the day, it's going to be a disincentive for Ontario consumers to do the very thing that the leaders of this Legislature are actually desiring, which is for Ontario consumers to buy within their local communities, to support local businesses and to make sure that the money stays within the province of Ontario.

You know, I'm worried that the government seems to be speaking from both sides of its mouth on this issue. On the one hand, they're saying, "Let's shop local," but at the very same time they're saying to Ontario consumers that we're going to drive up the cost of goods.

A few examples that I know of have been mentioned earlier in this debate with respect to the cost of things. I know a lot of folks like to purchase electronic items. The cost of eco fees on big-screen televisions, for example, have gone up by more than 40% in the province of Ontario. Now, if we're talking about trying to entice Ontario consumers to stay within the province of Ontario, they're going to look at a price differential of 40% and say, "Maybe I'm going to have better luck finding that TV in the United States," and they're going to try to shift their shopping elsewhere.

I don't think that's the kind of climate we want to create in the province of Ontario, and it's one of the

things I think we need to consider when we're debating this bill: that we can't suggest that we want Ontario consumers to stay here and buy goods when the cost differential is so great, and that's because of the regulations that are going to be put in place by this government simply driving up costs for Ontario consumers. So I have a significant issue with that, Mr. Speaker.

I also question the fact that in Ontario, this bill has been proposed as being part of the Liberal government's jobs plan. Now, I don't know how we can claim this to be the case when we're simply adding a tax to Ontario producers and manufacturers of about half a billion dollars, \$500 million, adding to the price of the goods that they're creating in manufacturing centres right across this province, in my community of Cambridge, in Hamilton, London, even in smaller areas. This is going to mean the cost of goods is going up, which is going to mean, again, that fewer goods are going to be sold, fewer products are going to be made, and fewer jobs are going to be realized.

So I have significant questions with the essence of this being part of the Liberal government's jobs plan. Certainly I know members of this Legislature recently met with folks from their community newspapers. We have community newspapers right across the province of Ontario—I have a couple in my riding, the Cambridge Times and Ayr News—that will be significantly impacted by this piece of legislation. It's going to drive their costs up astronomically. I know in areas like Timiskaming–Cochrane, Kenora–Rainy River and other parts of this province where community newspapers are the bread and butter of how the local residents get their news, these community newspapers are going to be significantly impacted by this piece of legislation.

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Jobs are going to be affected, and we have to say that the labour market in the media is very tight as it is. We're going to be asking for further reductions in jobs potentially in our community newspapers as a result of this piece of legislation. So we have to be concerned about the consequences of legislation like this because of what may be unintended from its initial onset.

In the remaining time that I have, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a bit about why this piece of legislation, in my view, has been proposed. Certainly from the perspective of myself, it's trying to hide, in many ways, the Liberal failure to improve recycling in the province of Ontario.

I know that the member from Durham was stating some statistics. We have had, since 2008, a promise to have a 60% waste diversion rate in the province of Ontario. Five years later, in 2013, that rate is still stalled at just 23%. We are significantly below our targets with respect to waste diversion, and that's a serious consideration and a serious concern. I think all members of the Legislature would love to see more waste diverted, but obviously what the government is doing hasn't worked, and there's no way of knowing that this is actually going to improve under this piece of legislation.

The industrial, commercial and institutional sector, the ICI sector, accounts for 60% of Ontario's waste, yet in

that sector the Liberals allowed recycling to decrease from 19% to 12%. I think the member from Durham was making that comment. It's a concern because we want to do our best to divert waste. We want to make sure that we are encouraging our businesses to do that, but, by adding a layer of bureaucracy, there's no way of knowing whether that's actually going to have any effect whatsoever.

Instead of showing leadership in waste diversion, the Liberals have spent all their time running massive eco tax schemes on tires, electronics and household hazardous materials, which, together, only make up 3% of the province's waste. Consumers have invested considerable amounts of money trying to reduce waste, and it's simply not working.

I want to also commend the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, who has done lots of work in this regard and on this bill. He has laid out a bold plan. He talks about it. I think he created it last November. Last November—so the government knows—while they were prorogued and not conducting business, I know that PC caucus members, like the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, were busy talking about ideas to get Ontario back on track.

We would start by scrapping the Liberal eco tax programs and eliminating the government's useless recycling bureaucracy. We believe businesses should do their part to recover recycled products into new products, but rather than create complicated bureaucracy and massive new costs for consumers, we would simply create the right conditions for economic growth.

We would do this by having the environment ministry set measurable and achievable recycling targets of certain materials, establish environmental standards, measure outcomes, and enforce the rules. That's it. Enforcing the rules obviously is very important, and they simply aren't being enforced as they are today. Having the Ministry of the Environment regulate the recycling industry would establish a direct line of accountability between the government and businesses.

I know the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane already talked about how setting up another board, another agency, to remove accountability from this government is a concern that I also agree with.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are lots of things we could be doing to aid in trying to get further waste diverted from our landfill. I would love to have the opportunity to further elaborate on those items, but again, I think this waste diversion act takes us down a path we simply don't want to go.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's a pleasure to be able to stand up and make some comments on the member for Cambridge. We disagree on a lot of things, but we—

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Be positive.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. We disagree on a lot of things, but we have some great conversations about our respective areas.

Mr. Rob Leone: And I'm the only one who gives you applause.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'm not going to go there.

We do share some views on this act, and I'd like to amplify them a bit. He brought up the part about community newspapers. My community newspaper in Timiskaming is one of the most important venues to find out what's going on in the central part of my riding, and they brought up an important point. I think when and if this bill goes to committee, it's things like that that we have to find out and fix. That's the part about sending a bill to committee, that we can actually make it work.

Overall, the biggest issue, I think, that we all have with not just this bill but with a lot of legislation is accountability. When you create the waste management authority, it sounds very authoritative. It sounds like we are doing the job. But in my business we say, "Where's the beef?" Well, where's the proof? It goes to the core of what we have to find out in committee: How can we make this move from sounding good to being actually accountable? It has been a huge problem, it continues to be a huge problem with this government and it will continue to be a problem. That's one that we have to really drill down to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I want to say that very widespread consultation took place before this bill was presented to the Legislative Assembly, including consultation with both of the critics in the opposition and widely within industry, with environmental groups and so on. It really represents as much of a consensus as you're going to find on this specific issue. One thing they said—and I don't say this in a partisan sense—was that the Waste Diversion Act of 2002 simply had to be replaced. We looked at a number of other options, and they said, "No, you really have to replace that, because the provisions of it allow people to avoid recycling and reusing products the way they might." So there was quite a consensus there.

I keep thinking of the question: So who, then, does pay for it? I hear people say the producers shouldn't be responsible financially for the ultimate disposal, or, in this case, diversion from disposal, of the product they produce. Well, if they don't have responsibility for it, who does? Is it the grateful taxpayer at the local level, the municipal property taxpayer who has to foot the bill? Who is it? I consider, and I think most people do, that it's part of a cost of doing business, so everything is reflected ultimately in the price.

In terms of jobs being produced, seven jobs are produced in recycling for every one job in disposal. I'm amazed—and the member may be aware, because I think there's a recycling firm in his area—at some rather substantial diversion taking place, the kind of recycling that's taking place that I would never have believed would be possible before. A lot of jobs are being created, and we're achieving the kind of diversion that we'd like to see. We want to make more progress. We believe this

bill, after it gets to committee, will ensure that progress takes place.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I just want to congratulate the member from Cambridge on widening the basis of this conversation on Bill 91. I think the reason for that is all of us recognize that, regardless of our view of this bill, this is only a small sliver of the huge problem that we're dealing with in our communities today.

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I think back on when I have been door-knocking in neighbourhoods, and I'm sure that everyone who has done any will agree with me that, first of all, you see about one or two garages out of every 10 that has a car in it; the rest of them all have discarded toys and things like that. When I see those piles—and sometimes it literally is just piles of stuff that has been discarded and not taken to the curb for not knowing what to do with them—it's kind of a microcosm of what we face as a community at large.

So my concern about this piece of legislation—I think this was brought forward by the member from Cambridge—is the fact that there is a lot more to do. There is a lot more education and there is a lot more opportunity for innovation than this bill allows for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to add my two cents to the comments that were made by the member from Cambridge. Here again we see that everybody in this House is in agreement that more needs to be done, and is in agreement that our province would be better off if we were to do recycling, if we were to reuse and if we were to make sure that we practice the three Rs no matter where we are. Whenever you introduce a change, there will be good things that will come of it, but there could be hardship put on some of our industries. It's really to find a path forward that will make sure that the prosperity that we want for our province, the prosperity that all of us want to share in, has an opportunity to continue while we bring those new programs on stream.

I have no doubt that we will succeed. I have no doubt that we will find a path that will make sure that industries like newsprint will have an opportunity to continue to flourish, be profitable and create jobs, while at the same time aiming for the goals that we all want: that we protect our environment, that we don't produce any more garbage than we need to and that we support, in the way of doing business, what makes the most sense for the environment.

We all have the same gut reaction when we get to a store and we see this great big package for a USB key that big. Why are they doing this? Nobody knows. I guess it's because they're afraid of having it stolen or whatever, but at the end of the day we all have the same gut reaction: Why are they doing this? I don't need such a big package to buy a USB key that is half an inch by three inches tall but that comes in a box that is a thousand times its size. We have to put our heads together to find the right balance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Cambridge, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to begin by thanking the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of the Environment, the member for York–Simcoe and the member for Nickel Belt for providing their questions and comments on what I had discussed earlier today.

I do want to make special note that I do have a recycling firm in my riding of Cambridge. Greentec does a great job of obtaining materials, taking them and re-packaging them. They take computer screens and computer monitors, and they have old TVs; they have a way of recycling the glass and the plastic from that, and they have a market for it. They are doing that on that basis. They were doing this prior to the introduction of the Waste Diversion Act. I've toured that facility, and it's a very interesting business that has been created there.

The Minister of the Environment did state that seven jobs are created in recycling for every one in diversion. It's an interesting comment, and I would love to know the statistics on that. If he could provide a breakdown, I would be very interested in that.

I would also say that part of this act is creating a new layer of bureaucracy, and I would hate to see that part of the seven jobs that we are doing here and implementing here are part of a new bureaucracy of waste diversion. While it might create jobs in recycling, they're going to kill jobs in the private sector, in our factories and so on and so forth. I'd like to see the Minister of the Environment's statistics on that, and he's very interested in providing that; he's looking through his notes right now. Maybe I'll have a piece of paper flown my way in the very short future.

I want to thank all members of the Legislature for indulging me this morning, and I look forward to the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I stand in my place today against this government and against one of their latest tax-and-spend schemes, Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act.

Stewardship of the environment is a very important concern of government. If we are not responsible and balanced stewards of our environment, our land, our resources, our energy, our air and our water, we as a society become unsustainable. We will not do well if we don't make the right choices.

Dealing with our waste appropriately is a major part of how we treat our environment. Government has a core duty to ensure the environment is healthy for future generations. Our quality of life is directly linked to our environment. Similarly, the quality of our environment is directly linked to the quality of our government. Ontario is a beautiful, bountiful place, hardly matched in the world for its quality of life and opportunity. I wish I could be as complimentary regarding its current government, which has been in power for 10 years now.

Ostensibly, Bill 91 is about stewardship of the environment, using our resources better by recognizing the

value in discarded materials and waste products so that they don't end up in a hole in the ground. Unfortunately, that is a fiction. Bill 91 does nothing of the sort. It only perpetuates this Liberal government's abysmal record on this important issue. Bill 91 provides a way to trick the public, further distort our free market and take advantage of taxing captive consumers and businesses. This bill is about diversion, but not of waste from landfill. It's about diverting attention from the government's record and its failure on waste diversion in Ontario.

One of the things that I think is important to add in this conversation is that diversion has to include a variety of methods. Some speakers have spoken about the importance of incineration, and I know that energy from waste is not a new concept. People in this province were bringing it forward at least 20, almost 30 years ago, and looking around the world and taking the best technology of the time. There was a great deal of information and opportunity in terms of the expertise that was right here in southern Ontario on providing opportunities for deriving energy from waste. There have been projects around the world. I know certainly in Prince Edward Island they have worked for many, many decades using the energy from waste. One of the previous speakers also mentioned the Durham example. I should just editorially say it's also with York region; York region and Durham came to an agreement several years ago, and we are seeing the fruition of that agreement with the incineration going to be conducted in Durham.

Before I go on, I would like to say congratulations to my caucus colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga, who is the PC critic for the Ministry of the Environment, for his work on this file. His ability to discuss solutions for environmental problems with all stakeholders and get past the roadblocks to build a plan has certainly impressed me, as does his faith in the free market. Government must get out of the way most of the time, and he understands that.

On the other hand, it's really too bad that the Minister of the Environment does not get it. As seen in Bill 91, and in Bill 6, for that matter, he has failed to come forward with legislation that matters. The sheen and the sell of the bills seem to matter, but when one reads the bill for substance, it never materializes.

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Earlier I referred to the Liberals' dismal record on increasing waste diversion. This government has made no progress on increasing the rate of waste diverted from landfill. Today's overall diversion rate in Ontario is 23%, whereas the goal since 2008 has been 60%. Only one quarter of garbage does not go into landfill. The other three quarters does. That's not including industrial, commercial and institutional—or ICI—waste, which makes up 60% of the waste in the province. When you look at those figures, it's easy to gloss over them, until you stop and think about what it means to have a diversion rate of 23% when the goal is 60%, and the fact that it doesn't include the industrial, commercial and institutional.

In my case, in my own constituency office I keep wanting to have a blue box and be able to separate what

would be non-blue box material. Of course, my staff keep reminding me that no, we're in a commercial setting and that doesn't exist. It just seems so frustrating that at this point in time, when, obviously, the greater amount of waste comes from ICI, that we have fallen behind and, in fact, just failed to provide this.

For the last five years, the government has been focused on eco taxes to recover the cost of recycling certain materials. New taxes were put on tires, electronics and household hazardous materials, which together only make up 3% of the waste stream in Ontario. One of the problems with doing something like that is that people are going to pay a fee if they think it's reasonable and if they think it's fair, but as soon as it appears to be gouging or it appears to be unfair, then they are going to choose ways to avoid—I stress “avoid”—the effect of that tax. They're going to look for ways to avoid it. That's legal, as opposed to “evade.”

In terms of the announcement last year about tires, what was the immediate reaction in my community, where tractor tires, for instance, were going to fall under this? The reaction of people was, “I'll find another place.” I realize that changes were made; I'm not suggesting they weren't. But it's a demonstration of being able to accurately gauge what's fair, what's reasonable, what people will be able to manage, and this was a demonstration of one that people couldn't manage.

People have mentioned the tractor tire tax going from \$92 to over \$800. As I started to say, in my neighbourhood that immediately brought a response from those potential purchasers: They would all go to Quebec; they would find a way to bring tires back. That just destroys the whole idea, because now those tires ultimately will end up having to be recycled through an Ontario program that, of course, wasn't paid for at the point of purchase.

We have a lot of issues with regard to the questions that are raised by Bill 91. It seems to me that this bill leaves aside trying to answer some of the very big questions that will remain in place.

We see, for instance, that Waste Diversion Ontario is proposed to be now called the Waste Reduction Authority. That reminds me of the joke about changing the deck chairs on the Titanic. It does nothing to give us confidence.

The fact that the bill proposes a new waste czar registrar, deputies, inspectors, waste enforcement officers and tribunal members: All of this suggests that we're not really looking at anything that is going to be in long-term best interests.

Ontario used to be a leader in the world for its waste diversion programs, just as Ontario used to be an economic leader among the provinces of Canada. We look at Bill 91 and see that the opportunity is a lost one in Bill 91.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to introduce Andrew Morrison-Gurza and his mother, Sher St. Kitts, sitting in the Speaker's gallery. They're from Richmond Hill. Andrew has recently graduated from Carleton University in disability and the law, and he works to raise awareness about issues facing people with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming Andrew and his mother, Sher St. Kitts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Thank you.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a pleasure for me to rise in my place today and recognize that there are two grade 10 classes from St. Joan of Arc high school in my riding, in the community of Maple. I believe that they are assembling in both galleries at this moment. I had the chance to speak to them, Speaker. I just wanted to welcome them to Queen's Park, and I hope they have a great tour.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's a great pleasure to introduce my friend James St. John, who is very active with the trades council and a great supporter of Hammer Heads, I know, an organization that supports young people and is near and dear to the hearts of many members here in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Nickel Belt, we have with us, to visit and observe Jack Derrenbacker, our page, his grandparents Bob and Joan Derrenbacker. We're glad they're here visiting in the gallery. Welcome.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for question period. The member from Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks very much, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity today.

My question is for the Premier. For weeks I have been requesting that you tell the ratepayers how much they are paying on their electricity bills because of the cancelled gas plants, and you keep refusing. I've been asking here in this chamber for two weeks.

Yet today, Dwight Duncan, the former Deputy Premier, the former Minister of Energy, the former finance minister, told the justice committee that these types of analyses would be done. In fact, he said the “government would routinely look at the impact aspect.”

For someone who has such a passion for “open government,” you sure fail in spelling and actually practising it, Premier. One of the most powerful colleagues that you have ever served with told this assembly, through the justice committee, that you would have had that information at your disposal.

Why won't you adhere to open government and finally release how much individual ratepayers are going to be on the hook for the cancelled gas plants?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Stop the clock.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I haven't seen the transcript from the committee this morning. I know the government House leader or the Minister of Energy will want to speak to the specifics. But I will just say that I have said all along that cabinet made decisions, government had information, and that information has been made available to the committee.

Tens of thousands of documents have been handed over to the committee. Questions have been answered. We broadened the scope of the committee. I appeared before the committee. That information has been made available.

I look forward to the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thank you, Premier, for again showing that you care not about open governments, that you only care about photo ops. But I wish you knew how to spell "government"; it's very important to the people.

You have known the true cost or at least the true range of the cancelled Oakville plants since 2011. Don't take my word for it; take Serge Imbrogno's, the Deputy Minister of Energy, who said that in December 2011 you knew the cost would exceed \$700 million. All the while, you and your colleagues said it was only \$33 million to \$40 million. You want to know why, Speaker? They wanted to rely on the province of Ontario and the people within it, the ratepayers who pay the bills—they wanted to rely on a distinction between taxpayer and ratepayer. It's absolutely despicable that she did this, and I have other words that would be unparliamentary.

You now know it costs \$1.1 billion. You know how much it costs the ratepayers. Will you table that today or will you get the Auditor General—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Be seated, please.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe that it is important that we have gone through this process. When I came into this office, I said that it was important to me that we open up the process, that we make sure that the information was available. The reason that the justice committee has had the opportunity to hear from the witnesses and has received the documentation is that we changed the process on this side of the House and we opened up the process.

I asked the Auditor General to look at the Oakville situation. The information that has been made available has been made available because of our commitment to that openness. I said that the questions that were being asked by the opposition would be answered. They have been answered; they have the information. That's as it should be. What is really important now is that we have a better process in place so that this will not happen again, and it would be great to have a report from the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again, back to the Premier: There are pretzels that are less twisted than your account of this story over the power plants.

Going back to the open government: You told this assembly on multiple occasions that, as a cabinet minister, you never discussed the cancelled Mississauga plant in a cabinet meeting. But Dwight Duncan, your colleague, who sat in the chair right beside your current finance minister, told our committee today that yes, it was actually discussed. He said that the Mississauga plant was discussed in cabinet.

For a Premier who likes to talk about conversations with the public, you sure do have lots of things you like to keep from them, too. Telling this House one thing when it is not true is contemptible. Again—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw and be careful of how she's wording.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Thanks. Withdrawn, Speaker.

Again, which is it? We know you sat in the cabinet, and we know you signed the cabinet document. You did so knowingly. You did so, knowing that there was going to be a significant cost to this. You signed your name on the dotted line. Why did you do it and why—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you, John Baird Junior.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment will come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The other members who are making the comments will allow me to do my job.

The member from Nepean—Carleton will withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to indicate to her that if it continues, it's more than just simply once, it's too many times, and I will bypass her and ask her to withdraw. That's it.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Yes, former finance minister Dwight Duncan was at committee. Let's hear some of the other things that he said. He said that those decisions were made by the former finance minister, the former Premier and the former Minister of Energy, full stop. He also said the decision on a cabinet document was made by the former Premier and former finance minister.

With respect to the rates, the member would know, when she received her briefing on how to be the energy critic, that rates are set by the Ontario Energy Board in a very public and open way. I want to know whether or not she has investigated how the rates are set at the OEB. In addition, there's a long-term energy plan that projects rate increases over a 20-year period. The existing plan projects increases at 3.5% over a 20-year period, which is less than the previous government's 20-year period.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I asked the Premier about the \$770-million Bombardier contract that was signed under her watch as transportation minister. She refused to answer any questions regarding that contract. The contract committed the province, through Metrolinx, to purchase 182 LRT vehicles for four projects in the city of Toronto. That contract also set out very specific delivery dates and substantial penalties if those dates were not honoured.

My question for the Premier today is this: Before she signed off on that contract—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of the Environment, come to order, for the last time.

Mr. Frank Klees: —did she inform herself of the details of that contract? Was she aware that it contains specific delivery dates and penalty clauses, and did she know that she was putting millions of tax dollars at risk by signing off on that contract?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Transportation has some specifics on this issue and he will answer the supplementary, but I want to just say that I am absolutely proud of the fact that we have vehicles being built by Bombardier in Thunder Bay to supply the transit build that is happening across the GTHA. I am very proud of the billions of dollars that we are investing in transit. Part of the reason that we are doing that is that we have to catch up on transit-building in this province because there were years of neglect where there was no investment in transit, where congestion was allowed to increase, and we know the economic toll that that has taken, and takes every year.

I'm proud of our record in terms of investing in transit. We will continue to do that. I appreciate that all of a sudden the party opposite is interested in transit, but it's a little bit late.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The Premier is proud that LRT vehicles are being built in Thunder Bay that have nowhere to go. This is not a good example of the Premier's response of transparency and open government.

The current Minister of Transportation proved yesterday that he knows nothing about this file. It was the Premier who signed off on the contract. The cost of that contract, because it was a sole-sourced contract, was inflated by more than \$200 million. Now, because Metrolinx is stuck with those cars, here's what they're doing: They're forcing municipalities like the region of Waterloo to buy those cars, forcing them to bypass an open tendering process so they can off-load those vehicles onto the citizens of Waterloo region and others.

I'm asking the Premier this question: Will she table that contract so that we can see the full cost of penalties to the people—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. Towards the end of the question I was having difficulty hearing the member from Newmarket–Aurora because someone on his own side was yelling too much. Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't know what the member opposite is talking about.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Now I will point out individuals. The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order. That's one.

Carry on.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

You know, if you don't want to use a BlackBerry or email, a good old-fashioned telephone to Metrolinx works really well.

I don't know what the fantasy is that he's constructing, but the only payment that has been put out recently was a \$65-million progress payment to Bombardier. Metrolinx very astutely and very wisely has bundled all of our LRT purchases, whether it's for the Kitchener–Waterloo line or for the Eglinton line, and very wisely uses the buying power of all of these municipalities together to do progressive purchases of equipment. There is nothing wrong; as a matter of fact, we're getting significant savings and these contracts are working—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Well, the minister confirmed that he knows nothing about this file. The reality is that a contract has been signed. There are penalty clauses for failing to take delivery on the specified date of delivery. He can try to waffle on this as much as he wants.

The Premier wants transparency. Why don't we start with this file? First, the Premier signed off on a sole-sourced contract that inflated the cost of those vehicles by more than \$200 million. Second, because there were no competitive bids, they are now stuck with it, and the projects that they were intended for have not appeared. That's why they are stuck.

So now one of those consequences is they're trying to off-load those vehicles onto municipalities like the region of Waterloo. They told the region of Waterloo they could not go to open tendering, because they were forcing them to take these cars.

I want to ask the Premier this: Will she stop down-loading her mistakes onto municipalities across—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, what I said very carefully is, I don't know what the member is talking about, because I can't find any evidence to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

I know you've done it, but I'm going to ask it: Will the member withdraw, please?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Again, I'll withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the member from Renfrew will come to order.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Quite frankly, I have a good relationship with Ken Seiling and Rob Prichard and Bruce McCuaig, who I speak to on a regular basis. No one has raised any concern about this, so I don't know who's raising concerns with the member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

We use the purchasing power of large municipalities, which means that the Toronto area and Mississauga have a lot of capacity to buy a lot of vehicles. So we buy them and we share them. We have agreements with Kitchener-Waterloo. There are hundreds of vehicles being bought. As I've said many times, we're also buying subway technology.

The member from Barrie would know. His community is a major recipient of those contracts because the tunnels are there. And, yes, they get shifted, and with 15 projects, the timing changes—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Ontarians paying the highest electricity bills in Canada have some serious questions about how their Liberal government makes decisions that hit their hydro bills.

Can the Premier confirm today news reports that she attended a \$10,000-a-plate fundraiser organized by private nuclear operator Bruce Power just days before the government made key decisions about Ontario's energy future?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the leader of the third party is asking whether I—as she and the leader of the Conservatives do—fundraise, yes. I attend fundraising events. I attend fundraising events with many, many people. There is access across the political spectrum. It's part of the democratic process. One of the things that I always say at fundraisers is I thank people for taking part in that part of the democratic process.

The fundraiser to which the leader of the third party refers was completely unrelated to a decision around new nuclear, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, can the Premier tell us who attended and whether she discussed with any of the attendees the government's pending decision on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

The members on this side will come to order.

Do you need to repeat?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'll repeat it. Thanks, Speaker.

Can the Premier tell us who attended and whether she discussed with any of the attendees the government's pending decisions on nuclear power?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The leader of the third party knows full well that all of the information about the amounts and the people who have donated—those pieces of information are posted once the cheques have been processed.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We brought in that.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We brought in that process, Mr. Speaker. We made it mandatory for that information to be made available.

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So, Mr. Speaker, as the leader of the third party does and as the Leader of the Opposition does, we all take part in fundraising events. It's part of the process. It takes money to make political parties able to function, and that applies to all parties. The conversations that happen at those fundraisers are wide-ranging. I think the Minister of Energy described it as brainstorming. That happens at events across the province, with a wide range of organizations and individuals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For nearly a decade, the government ignored the evidence that new nuclear plants would be expensive and unnecessary. In fact, the government plowed ahead and spent \$180 million on plans that were doomed. For years, they could not be persuaded to see common sense. But now people see that private interests with a lot riding on this decision were able to get access to the Premier, and lo and behold the Liberals changed a policy that they had held for years.

Will the Premier admit that at the very least this doesn't look very good?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Bruce Power has donated to the NDP and to the PCs this year. The fact is that organizations donate to all the parties. They're in conversation with all of us, because it is part of the political process.

The fact is that planning in the energy sector is extremely important. The leader of the third party—I don't know if she has looked at the energy plans that we have put in place. I don't know how closely she has looked at the changes in supply. I don't know if she recognizes that it's very important to understand what the projections are as you make plans going forward. The work that has been done in order to prepare for a possible new build is work that will not go to waste; it's information that is needed that may be used in the future, and we are being responsible in responding to the current situation.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Premier. Ontario households and businesses are paying the highest electricity bills in the country, and they are tired of paying for decisions that have more to do with the Liberal Party's interests than the public interest: \$1.1

billion for cancelled private power plants in Oakville and Mississauga, \$180 million on doomed nuclear plans, \$950 million on nuclear refurbishment planning on contracts that they've signed without knowing what the final price tag is going to be for those plans and decisions being made behind closed doors. Does the Premier think this is a good way to run an electricity system in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm just going to go over some of the things that we have done to stabilize the energy system in the province, because if you remember, Mr. Speaker, when we came into office, there was a fair degree of disarray in terms of energy in this province. We've invested in modernizing and rebuilding approximately 12,000 megawatts of new, cleaner power for Ontario. We don't have an energy deficit any longer. We don't need to worry about the constant threat of brown-outs. We've invested over \$10 billion in improvements in Hydro One systems, including upgrades to over 7,500 kilometres of power lines—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—well, never mind. Just relax.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, that transmission network is so important to the health of the energy system. So that investment in 7,500 kilometres of power lines is critical to the stability of the system.

Our green energy strategy has attracted \$24 billion in private sector investment, and it has created over 31,000 jobs. Ontario has 2,700 clean tech firms and employs 65,000 people in the clean tech sector.

We have taken action on energy. We have a much more stable system than when we came into office, Mr. Speaker. That's what planning does for you, and we will continue to act in that responsible manner.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people accept that mistakes happen, but what they don't accept is making the same mistake over and over and over again. The Premier says wasting \$1.1 billion was a mistake. But she's signing contracts that are putting Ontarians on the hook for almost \$1 billion, and she has no idea where the money stops. The Premier says she'll be open and transparent, but people see decisions being made behind closed doors that drive electricity prices through the roof.

Why hasn't the Premier learned that people should come first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Expenditures to date on nuclear refurbishment are for definition-phase activities such as the establishment of the project organization, scope finalization, engineering, planning, procurement and contracting. The idea that this is secret and nobody knows about it is a pile of bunk. All of OPG's expenditures—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence and the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, take it outside.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, all of OPG's expenditures related to nuclear refurbishment are reviewed by the independent Ontario Energy Board as part of the rate-setting process. It's all public information. OPG is taking significant steps to ensure the refurbishment at Darlington is done right, including a staged approach to refurbishment. We have selected an independent oversight adviser for the Darlington refurbishment project through an open, competitive RFP process. This adviser will provide regular updates on the progress of the Darlington nuclear refurbishment to the Ministry of Energy. This will include—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We know the Premier has wasted \$1.1 billion on gas plant relocations. We have been told that \$180 million was wasted on plans for nuclear plants, but no one knows what the real cost is because the Premier is refusing to call in the auditor. And the Premier has signed contracts worth almost \$1 billion without any idea how high the final price tag will be in the future.

That's the past, that's the present, and that's the future. How can the Premier say that she has learned anything at all?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I just wonder whether or not the leader of the third party is being a little bit glib about this issue. Yesterday, she referred to nuclear refurbishment as when you go out to buy a new car. We're talking about a \$15-billion project. You need a lot of due diligence, and that due diligence is being done. First of all, all of the contracts to date have been subject to Ontario Energy Board—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek didn't get the message the first time, he'll get it now. If you can tell, I'm not in a happy place at this moment. So if anyone wants to test, you'll lose.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: All of these costs have been subject to review by the public, independent Ontario Energy Board. In addition, as I've said, we have an independent oversight adviser who is providing regular reports on this. We have to do an environmental assessment. We have to do project consideration. We have to do procurement consideration. On a \$15-billion project, I defy the leader of the third party to suggest how you can go into it cold, without the necessary—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. We know for a fact, Minister, that a fraction of the \$235 million for the essential services budget is not the complete security budget.

We've heard security figures actually too plentiful to list here today. Then, one of your security staff has subsequently confirmed that the mystery budget has been well overblown.

So Minister, today, I want to know exactly what the budget is for all Pan Am-related security costs and if they're included in the \$1.4-billion Pan Am budget. Minister, be open, be transparent with the Ontario public—just the numbers, not your roundabout spin, not your generic talking points. Give me the goods.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much for the question. Recently, we heard a lot of numbers from the opposition members. They talk about the athletes' village, \$700 million not allocated in the \$1.4-billion TO2015 budget. He turns around and he seems to be surprised that it's not in there, and then a few days later he will turn around and talk to the public that, "You know what? I know that allocation, that \$700 million, was not in the TO2015 budget for over two years."

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I'll give you another example here, Speaker. He talked about the security. He keeps saying that the Pan Am Games security will be about \$1 billion, and then he will turn around, "You know what? That \$1 billion may not be \$1 billion."

So, Speaker, what we've been—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham will come to order.

Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: All right, another game of Ring Around the Rosie here. I'm not sure if you don't know, Minister, or you just don't want me to know. I'm trying to figure that part out. Perhaps the minister is too busy cooking the books on the Pan Am Games to actually manage his portfolio.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member will withdraw.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Withdrawn.

The current security budget is shrouded in mystery, and the transportation plan is a security risk. Adding 350 buses and 1,000 cars to the most congested routes in Toronto and, indeed, Canada, to transport 7,000-plus athletes is ridiculous at best, and yet we don't have a plan and we don't have a budget for transportation either—not one you're willing to share with us, anyway, Minister. Your portfolio is characterized by runaway spending and poor planning.

Minister, what is the exact number for the Pan Am security and the total transportation costs, and are these on your Pan Am books? Yes or no? It's a simple question; give me the goods.

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you again for the question. Again, the member talks about our numbers—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Attorney General, come to order.

Hon. Michael Chan: —and the numbers he talked about were wrong.

The Pan Am Games is a big game; it's a complex game. We're going to welcome 41 countries to Ontario. We're going to attract 250,000 tourists to Toronto and Ontario. It would generate \$3.7 billion to our economy.

Speaker, come 2015, Ontario will welcome the competitors, the coaches—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Michael Chan: —totalling about 10,000 people. These are complex games. The ministry is working very hard to come up with those numbers.

LOBBYISTS

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. Whether it's Alfred Apps, the former president of the Liberal Party, lobbying under the table, or the Premier refusing to say whether well-connected lobbyists from EllisDon lobbied her, or the Premier participating in a \$100,000 fundraiser held by Bruce nuclear days before the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no. I'm still standing, but there's talking going on.

Carry on.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —or the Premier participating in a \$100,000 fundraiser held by Bruce nuclear days before the government made a major decision impacting the nuclear industry, people are concerned about well-connected Liberal lobbyists getting special treatment.

My private member's bill today will open up lobbying to greater transparency. Does the Premier agree that it's time to open up lobbying and create more transparency?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very aware of the honourable member's private member's bill, and I look forward to the debate this afternoon. I'm also aware that the Integrity Commissioner, an officer of this Legislature, who is also responsible for lobbyists, has herself talked about some changes to the Lobbyists Registration Act.

As members are aware, there were changes that were brought forward that did not proceed because of prorogation. Right now, we're studying that report and studying potential changes to strengthen it. We do have a good system here in the province of Ontario, but certainly we're open to discussions of how it could be strengthened. As I say, I look forward to the debate this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: My private member's bill will bring greater transparency to lobbying in Ontario. While other parties talk about openness, only New Democrats

are taking steps to make government more transparent. My bill will close loopholes so that all lobbyists are registered. My bill will mean that lobbying activities are made public so Ontarians know who is lobbying whom, and it will make sure there are real punishments for people who break the rules.

The Premier says she believes it's time for more openness. New Democrats are ready to deliver results. Will the Premier follow the NDP's lead?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I kind of think we've reached our limit here. I think on all sides of the House we recognize the role that lobbyists play and the fact that we need oversight, but the holier-than-thou attitude over there is a little bit rich—because let me tell you about a wonderful event that happened on October 16 at the Royal Conservatory of Music. It was called the Leader's Gala:

“Yes, we will be attending the Leader's Gala.

“We will celebrate with Ontario New Democrats at the Leader's Gala by purchasing the following sponsorship package”—my friends, for only \$9,500, you can be a member of the Leader's Circle. But, hey, if that's a little too rich, for \$7,500, you could join the Queen's Park Circle. Or for those of you a little down on your luck, for \$4,500, you could be at the counsel level. You can pay by cheque, Visa and MasterCard, all payable to the Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. I'm still not in a happy place.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm not getting attention so that I can quiet things down for others to interject, and I suspect you're getting the message that I'm not happy at this moment.

New question.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My question this morning is to the Minister of Education. Minister, this week you introduced legislation that provides a clear role for government in labour negotiations in the education sector, while continuing to respect the collective bargaining process. I know our government has worked hard to rebuild the relationship with our partners in education, and I'm pleased that we're working towards a much better future together, and that's going to continue to improve student success.

We all know that one way to avoid labour disruption is to ensure a process exists that encourages collaborative and ongoing discussions that resolve common concerns. Minister, would you share with this House this morning the process you took in developing this framework, how

you engaged our partners in the education sector in the development of this important legislation?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Oakville for this important question.

Speaker, when I was first appointed Minister of Education, my first priority was to rebuild relationships with our partners so we could move forward with a common purpose and improve student achievement. The legislation that I introduced earlier this week will help the education sector move forward with a clear process and common understanding of collective bargaining in the education sector.

It's important to understand that this is made-in-Ontario legislation; it's a unique Ontario approach to collective bargaining that was developed through extensive consultation with our education partners: school boards and unions and federations. We listened to their feedback. We used their input to draft a bill that reflects and respects their interests. I look forward—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

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Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thanks to the minister for that response. I know it's important, and I think we all agree that it's important to parents and students in all our communities, and especially in my riding of Oakville, to know we can maintain that positive start we've had in our schools in this school year.

I understand, and we all know, that the current collective agreements that are in place are due to expire at the end of August 2014. That would mean that negotiations for the next round of collective bargaining will begin in very early 2014. That's only a few months away. Can the minister explain to this House why it's so critical for parents and students right across this province that this legislation is passed and passed as quickly as possible?

Hon. Liz Sandals: The member raises an excellent question. It's absolutely essential to have the provisions of the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act in place before the next round of negotiations. As the member pointed out, almost every contract in the school board sector expires in August 2014. We need this legislation passed so that we can move forward with a clear process that defines the role of the school board associations, the role of the unions and federations and the role of the government at the central table, and the role of unions and local school boards at the local tables.

We need this legislation, and I hope that we can count on the members of all parties, every member in this House, to make sure that we get this legislation passed so that we can move forward with good labour relations with a good process in the next round of collective bargaining.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Premier: People have the perception that government jobs pay a whole lot

better than regular jobs. We know they're right; it's in the research. If you add up wages, holidays, sick days, early retirement, job security and pensions, public servants come in 30% better off than their private sector counterparts, counterparts who are paying the freight. These are the people who are paid 30% less with no pension. It's not fair, Premier, and you have allowed it to become so out of whack from what should be pay equity.

Premier, will you support my Comprehensive Pay Fairness Act this afternoon? Will you support transparency to shine the light on this unfairness and to restore pay equity between the public and private sector employees?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I read with interest the member's private member's bill, and as far as I can tell, what he's interested in doing is establishing more bureaucracy at Queen's Park in order to oversee a negotiation process—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound is warned.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who's next?

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: —a labour relations environment which, over the last number of years, has seen a number of agreements between the government and the unions that are represented here at Queen's Park that, in fact, have seen restraint across the board.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: I'll give examples. The government has concluded two collective agreements with its two largest unions, OPSEU and AMAPCEO, as well as the Professional Engineers Government of Ontario, and the Association of Ontario Physicians and Dentists in Public Service. All four contracts were negotiated. The most recent ones include two-year wage freezes that will help the government fight the deficit.

On this side of the House, we're taking action, not asking for more bureaucracy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back to the Premier: It sounds like a bit of a start, but the research is in. C.D. Howe, the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, the Fraser Institute, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the federal Treasury Board: Government jobs pay more—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy is warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Government jobs pay more: higher perks, higher pay and higher pensions. It's not fair, and it's expensive. Drummond says that half the Ontario budget goes to public sector compensation. Half of \$128

billion is \$64 billion. And they are being compensated at 30% above market rates—30% too much. That equals \$19 billion a year. You're paying public servants \$19 billion over regular market labour rates.

Premier, again, will you support transparency? Will you support public-private pay equity, described in my bill? Will you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Member, sit down. And I don't need the member from Timmins—James Bay to tell me how to keep count. Thank you.

Answer.

Hon. John Milloy: I know that the members opposite don't like to read the budget, and didn't read the budget, but I will ask him to break that and read page 126. "Agreements have been—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haldimand—Norfolk is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: "Agreements have been reached with bargaining agents representing nearly 50,000, or over"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: "—or over three quarters of Ontario public service employees."

The agreement reached with AMAPCEO, the professional crown employees of Ontario, "includes a two-year wage freeze and the restructuring of merit pay, short-term sickness benefits and time-off provisions, which will result in cost avoidance of \$24.6 million in 2012-13 and \$30.4 million in 2013-14."

"The agreement reached with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) includes a two-year wage freeze, a reduction in the entry-level..." It goes on and on. "The agreement will avoid costs of \$34.1 million in 2013 and \$37.4 million in 2014."

We're taking action. We don't need more bureaucracy.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question this morning is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. The Ontario government claims to be open for business to mining companies and the economic benefits they will bring to this province, but the reality is that this government has been sitting on the sidelines for years and failed to establish even the simplest of mining development plans that involved communities, First Nations and companies alike.

Companies are told to drive the process of consultation without any government input or guidelines, a process which is creating animosity with First Nations and

delaying development and jobs. Will this government take action before companies and investment dollars start fleeing our province?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Quite frankly, I think the member could not be more wrong. We are seeing, obviously, some great opportunities moving forward with the mining sector. I was just up in Lac des Iles a couple of days ago, where they commissioned a new mine site—a great consultation with the First Nation there, Gull Bay First Nation.

We're seeing other examples of that all across the province. We put forward a modernized Mining Act that, indeed, continued to provide the clarity that industry was looking for, but also updated it so it was very much reflective of 21st-century values. That's why we have included in that considerable changes in how we consult with our aboriginal communities and our aboriginal leadership.

I'm a little bit startled by the question. I suspect that in the supplementary I may get some more details and more specifics, but indeed, we're seeing 23 new mines opening up in the last 10 years, and we're going to continue to see positive opportunities in the mining sector here in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I incorrectly identified the member from Halton on an issue, and I apologize.

Carry on. Supplementary.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, to the minister: I can say with confidence that challenges to northern development are happening all across the north, and that communities and businesses agree that the framework and government guidance are just not there. This is precisely why the NDP has been calling on the government to take a leadership role in creating a real plan and engaging in real consultation that will benefit job creation in this province.

When will this government stop avoiding challenges and get to work, creating a real plan for job creation in the mining sector?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: We brought a 100-year-old piece of legislation into the 21st century by introducing rules and structure that will improve, and that have improved, how exploration activities are carried out in the province of Ontario. We are in the process of an extraordinary consultation with Matawa First Nations and the province, in negotiating moving forward on the Ring of Fire development, which again is unprecedented. It's historic. It began with a meeting that the Premier, myself and the aboriginal affairs minister had.

The fact is that we are working very, very closely with the mining sector. I'm looking forward to seeing them all joining us here next week. I certainly would invite my colleague to have some discussions with us about this. We are going to continue to move forward. We've got great, positive developments in the mining sector. We're going to continue to see it, creating more jobs and more opportunity for everybody in the province of Ontario.

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RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question for the Minister of Research and Innovation. The Ottawa area is home to many innovative companies. These companies have been creating innovative products that help people across the province, including Emma-Rose Gibson from the Ottawa area. Emma, a legally blind fourth-grade student, is one of the first users of eSight eyewear, a pair of computerized glasses developed by the Ottawa-based eSight Corp. Since May, Emma has been wearing the glasses. Not only do they grant her a greater degree of mobility, but they are also helping her participate in a new way in her classroom. Recently Emma said, "I went from just seeing nothing to seeing everything in my classroom."

The development of these eSight computerized glasses is made possible through financial support from our government. I'm happy to see that our investments are helping children in a very positive way.

Despite the investment in several research and development initiatives, many entrepreneurs across Ontario have a hard time turning their innovative ideas into innovative products. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What is our government doing to help entrepreneurs take their innovative ideas and products to the next stage?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I want to thank the member from Ottawa—Orléans for that question. Our government recognizes the importance of providing support to innovative companies to thrive and compete in the global market.

Our Investment Accelerator Fund, for example, assists innovative and emerging companies. To date, the Investment Accelerator Fund program has made investments in 68 promising Ontario companies, which created 1,100 jobs.

Our Innovation Demonstration Fund funds companies looking to commercialize new technologies that have both commercial and environmental impacts. To date, the Innovation Demonstration Fund program has committed to 41 projects and is expected to create over 4,100 jobs.

I am proud to say that our investments help many young and innovative companies not only to compete in Ontario but around the world.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm glad that our government has invested in the initiatives needed to help companies move their ideas through the expensive commercialization process. Emma-Rose Gibson's story illustrates how important it is to continue supporting innovative companies to develop their ideas into new products and services so that we can improve the quality of life for all Ontarians.

As the minister knows, our government has consistently supported Ontario's strong health care system through strategic investments to ensure that the needs of residents are effectively looked after. One of the ways this can be accomplished is through research and innov-

ation in life sciences and technology. We need to create the right conditions to allow our health and technology sectors to make breakthroughs and advances that will increase the standard of care in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Research and Innovation: What other initiatives is the government undertaking to foster innovation in the Ontario health care system?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for that very important question. Our government recognizes that innovation will help our province to stay at the forefront of health research in the world.

We have invested, for example, \$100 million in the Ontario Brain Institute to support research in the field of brain diseases. We have also invested \$357 million in the Ontario Institute for Cancer Research, which is one of the leading institutions in the world, and we have committed \$1.3 billion to support research in various fields in Ontario research institutions through the Ontario Research Fund.

I am proud to say that our investment in health research has provided better health care to Ontarians across the province.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. As you know and as we mentioned the other day, it's Small Business Week here in Ontario. To help celebrate Small Business Week, I introduced the No New Tax for Businesses Act to protect small businesses from being punished by your new trades tax, courtesy of the Ontario College of Trades. The bill removes section 7 out of the College of Trades act so that businesses can't be taxed.

Minister, will you support my bill to protect small businesses from the newest Liberal tax that will kill jobs and hurt small businesses here in our province?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I don't think I could have been more clear when I answered this very same question earlier in the week. We did not proclaim that section.

We have no intentions of proclaiming that section. Let's be very, very clear here, because I think the member is trying to allow businesses to think something other than what's going on here. The fact is that businesses do not have to pay to be involved with the College of Trades. We would encourage them to do so.

I'm a little concerned as I look at the member's bill. He supports what we're doing on one part of the bill, but is the member suggesting that businesses should not be involved in the skilled trades? Is he suggesting that businesses should not get involved with the College of Trades? I think that's a pretty dangerous thing to want to suggest. Businesses should be involved; they're an important part of the industry. It's everybody working together that's going to help us build a strong economy. Why would you want to divide them all up?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want the businesses involved; I don't want them taxed. I don't want them taxed. That's what your bill does.

I can tell you first-hand that small businesses value certainty and transparency, and you're talking about transparency all week. If you never intend to proclaim section 7, then why do you have it? Let's remove it. That's what I'm asking you today. Unless you plan to use the small businesses to pay for your \$1-billion gas plant scandal or other runaway spending, and all the messes you've made over there, you should do the right thing.

Section 7 is a huge tax hike looming over the small businesses here in our province. But can you do something, Minister? Pass my bill and show small businesses that they never will have to pay the College of Trades business tax. Will you stand with small businesses and support the No New Tax for Businesses Act, Bill 118, my new private member's bill? Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock.

Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: For the fourth time this week, we did not proclaim section 7. We do not have any intentions of proclaiming section 7. We will not be looking to businesses to pay fees, unless they choose to do so.

Mr. Speaker, if the member really cared about small business, he would have supported our employer health tax exemption, which is providing benefit to 60,000 small businesses across this province. If you really cared about small businesses, you would have supported that. You didn't.

I think what we're seeing here is a bunch of propaganda, a bunch of rhetoric. At the end of the day, we've got to get every sector in this province working together to create jobs and build a small economy. We want businesses to work with the College of Trades, be involved with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please.

When I say "thank you," that's it. And when I stand, you sit.

New question, please.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. This government ruined a lot of Thanksgiving dinners in Niagara when it held, the Friday before the long weekend, a press conference to cut the Fort Erie Race Track out from the province's horse racing plans. While the Premier took political cover behind one of her many advisory panels, families were suddenly faced with agonizing choices: keep feeding horses that may never race again at Fort Erie Race Track, or try to sell the horses, try to sell the farm and leave their homes and livelihoods behind?

After gutting the local economy, the Premier promised a different kind of future for Fort Erie. Can she kindly tell the people who actually live there what she has in mind?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: What I have said repeatedly is that Fort Erie can work with the Ontario Racing Commission and with the OLG to determine what that future would look like. In fact, I hope that happens. I hope that there can be an arrangement that is put in place so that Fort Erie can continue to race, as there was a season this year. My hope is that they will do that.

What our Horse Racing Transition Panel has done is it has put in place a plan that we are implementing that will put \$400 million over five years to put in place a sustainable horse racing industry in the province. That did not exist, Mr. Speaker. We did not have a sustainable plan. The SARP plan was not sustainable over the long term. It wasn't transparent; it wasn't open. Elmer Buchanan and John Snobelen and John Wilkinson did us a huge service by putting in place a plan that we can now invest in over the next five years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Nobody in Fort Erie has any idea what "festival racing" even means and, frankly, neither does the government.

This week in question period, the Premier washed her hands of the people who make a living from horse racing at the Fort Erie track. She told them to sort out their consolation prize with the OLG, but the OLG isn't talking to them either. Time is running out and livelihoods are hanging in the balance. Why is this government so determined to make sure that there is no 117th racing season at Fort Erie Race Track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Rural Affairs.

1130

Hon. Jeff Leal: We do have a good plan in place, a plan that has been developed by John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson. Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, our plan is galloping forward; the NDP plan is still at the starting gate.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, in my community of Scarborough–Rouge River, I've always heard cases of constituents being scammed when buying cars from private sellers. With a large population of new Canadians in the riding, and the dependency on cars to get around, I've been attempting to inform my constituents on what to be aware of when buying cars from private sellers.

I have informed my constituents to be aware of unlicensed dealers who pose as private sellers. In the past, they have usually targeted buyers of inexpensive, reliable and economical vehicles. However, I'm now aware of cases where these private sellers are dealing in newer and luxury models. They are also now more and more moving to online methods of selling high-end cars and pickup trucks.

Speaker, is the minister aware of—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River very much for raising this very important question. He's absolutely right: There's a new and growing trend of online targeting of luxury brand cars by private sellers.

The Ontario Motor Vehicle Industry Council, also known as OMVIC, which falls under the auspices of my ministry, is regulating vehicle sales. They have found, in a recent investigation, this trend that the member speaks of.

Many of these private sellers may try to represent themselves as legitimate dealers when, in fact, they're not. They also misrepresent the vehicles they're actually selling. The vehicles are often insurance write-offs, accident-damaged vehicles or have the odometers tampered with.

Similar to most things, consumers are looking online for vehicle sales. Research by the Used Car Dealers Association found that one third of vehicles for sale online—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Minister, that is a higher number of online ads by these private sellers than I would have thought.

Mr. Speaker, I consider myself a smart consumer, but even I was surprised by the details of some of the ads found online on the Internet. It was easy to see how a strongly motivated buyer can drop their guard and go after the car or truck that they've always wanted to own. Some buyers are putting down payments without physically having seen the vehicle to ensure that they would get the vehicle at the discounted price.

However, my concern, especially with online ads, is that if the consumer was scammed, it is difficult to verify and catch the people behind them, as these crimes are becoming borderless and faceless.

Minister, how can I help ensure my constituents are not being taken for a ride—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Well, of course, I think the member from Scarborough–Rouge River is a very informed constituent as well, and I appreciate him bringing this forward.

The Motor Vehicle Dealers Act does maintain a fair and transparent marketplace by requiring dealers to provide all-in price advertising, mandatory full disclosure vehicle history and cancellation rights.

This act, administered by OMVIC, along with a compensation fund to support consumers in certain situations, is in place. However, it's very important that consumers do understand that they are only protected by Ontario's consumer protection laws when they buy from an OMVIC-registered dealer. If they buy privately, and something happens, OMVIC is unable to intervene.

I encourage all consumers to be careful making a vehicle purchase decision and to buy from a registered dealer.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. Minister, last month, we called on your government to produce a real plan for jobs in the economy, but what did we get? A reckless proposal to take half a billion dollars out of Ontario's manufacturing sector. This isn't a credible jobs plan.

This is the same risky economic theory you used for the Green Energy Act, and look what happened: The Liberal government killed thousands of manufacturing jobs just to subsidize a few green jobs.

Minister, how can Ontarians take you seriously when your government's only job plan is to saddle the manufacturing sector with half a billion dollars in new costs?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Once again, I want to express sympathy with the member because when his leader had the shuffle and was moving people around—front seats, back seats and new portfolios—I thought that he would request not to be the critic for environment because all the questions you ask are anti-environment. I really am sympathetic, because I think in his heart of hearts the member probably is an environmentalist, but he's compelled to ask anti-environment questions. He obviously doesn't want the producers of these materials to pay the cost; he wants the taxpayers of this province to pay the cost. I think it is up to those who produce the waste in the first place to assume the cost, and not the taxpayers of this province, who I will stand up for.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: I wish to correct my record. During question period I indicated that the government had in fact introduced lobbyist legislation. The fact is that we stated our intention publicly to introduce that legislation. It was not introduced.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I would like to correct the record as well. In my response to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, I indicated that Ontario has opened up 23 new mines in the last 10 years. The fact is that we've opened up 24 new mines in the last 10 years.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Energy on a point of order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to correct the record. When I spoke of the \$15-billion cost, I was referring to the cost of new nuclear, not refurbishment.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Simcoe North has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, concerning the College of Trades amendment act. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: They are not present in the chamber at this very moment, but I know that they are on their way here, and I will at some point hopefully introduce my brother Mike Natyshak, who lives in Toledo, Ohio, and my best friend, Taner Garica, who are both professional hockey players. I brought them in tonight to stack our legislative team. My brother played for the Quebec Nordiques and my best friend, Taner, played professional hockey as well. We might have a chance against the Toronto fire department tonight.

I want to welcome them once they get here. I'm sure I'll point them out and members will all applaud them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for your unofficial member's statement. Your introduction is very acceptable.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Barrie has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the minister responsible for the 2015 Pan Am/Parapan American Games concerning the Pan American Games security costs. This matter will be debated next Tuesday at 6 p.m.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Kitchener-Conestoga has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act. This matter, too, will be debated on Tuesday, October 29, at 6 p.m.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Shalom. Fifteen years ago, I had the privilege to table the Holocaust Memorial Day Act

that received enthusiastic all-party support, which led to its rapid enactment in Ontario law.

The Holocaust affected the lives of all Ontarians, especially those who fought during the Second World War and helped liberate the survivors of the concentration camps. Most of the survivors who emigrated to Canada settled in Ontario, where they made and continue to make great contributions that enrich the lives of all Ontario citizens.

Today, Holocaust survivors have gathered here at the Legislature to be honoured for their contributions as we fulfill Yizkor to remember their suffering and the sacrifice of six million Jews who perished during Shoah.

On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I extend my congratulations to the survivors who join us today and to representatives of Canadian-Jewish organizations, such as the Sarah and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Educational Centre, who work tirelessly to help keep the memory of the Holocaust and its many contemporary lessons alive in our minds and hearts.

GRACE REBEKAH LODGE 136

Ms. Cindy Forster: It's my privilege to rise today and pay tribute to members past and present of Grace Rebekah Lodge, chapter 136, in Port Colborne, as they celebrate a century of community service.

Two of the longest-serving members—Eva Eagles, for 47 years, and Eleanor Fisher, for 50 years—will be cutting an anniversary cake on Saturday, October 27, at a dinner being held in Welland. They are part of a commemorative organizing committee, along with Ruth Pederson, Sybil Hanna and Elaine Paquet.

The Rebekah chapter was chartered on October 27, 1913, with 14 members. The Rebekah Lodge worldwide started out in 1851 as the female branch of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. Many have been helped with money raised by the Rebekahs locally, including the Welland County hospital, Women's Place, cystic fibrosis, the kidney foundation, Camp Trillium for children stricken with cancer, the Arthritis Society, Santa's Helpers, eye research and many local high school bursaries.

It's a long-standing organization, but the club membership is aging and looking for new members. When you look at current members and their involvement, it demonstrates the long-lasting friendships that are developed, so I encourage people to join.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to recognize the commitment, dedication and service to others chapter 136 members of Grace Rebekah Lodge in Port Colborne have demonstrated over the years. Their work is deeply appreciated, and I congratulate them on their 100th anniversary.

JACK "CHICK" GORDON

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today I rise in the Legislature to pay tribute to Jack "Chick" Gordon of Scar-

borough, who passed away recently after a brief but courageous battle with cancer.

Jack was a remarkable person whose life was a shining example of perseverance, humility, responsibility and humour that typifies the hard work of the generation who came before us and built this province into the economic powerhouse it has become.

The unusual nickname "Chick" came about when his dad made him go to the chicken farm to work and to look after the chicks. The nickname stuck his whole life, and many people didn't know that "Jack" was his real name.

Jack married his lifelong sweetheart and he had two children: Linda, who married Glenn, and David, who married Althea and gave him two grandchildren, Josh and Kaela.

But Chick was not only a loving husband, dad and a granddad. He was also the consummate salesperson, rising to the ranks of national sales manager for the aluminum giant Hunter Douglas. There was always a deal to be made, a client to be served or an account to close on.

Jack Gordon was a hard worker who was a shining example of the tremendous work ethic that we owe so much to in this province. Remarkably, he worked right up to the end at 81, still making his sales calls.

Speaker, sometime around 7:30 last evening, God bought his first order of aluminum siding, and Jack "Chick" Gordon was finally reunited with the love of his life, Phyllis, and his Password buddies Peter and Joyce.

GREAT BLUE HERON CHARITY CASINO

Mr. John O'Toole: The Great Blue Heron Casino in Port Perry, in my riding, was sanctioned in 1993, about 20 years ago this year. Actually, today the Great Blue Heron Casino is one of the larger employers in Durham region and is highly supported and highly respected in the riding itself.

In my riding, the Great Blue Heron Casino has a long-standing plan to build a new portion of the gaming facility near the current site. The amount of the investment would be \$165 million. Mr. Speaker, this would attract tourism and jobs to the region and be an important contribution. All the issues around modernization are kind of standing in the way of it.

I think it's very important to understand that since 2000, the charitable gaming arm of the casino, the Baagwating Community Association, has donated over \$24 million to the region of Durham, the township of Scugog, indeed, and other parts of Ontario as well.

I'm asking the government to stop dragging its feet and work with Chief Kelly LaRocca and the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation to give them the go-ahead for the needed investment.

These are important decisions for the community of the Mississaugas, as well as for Port Perry and the region of Durham, and I want to be on the record as supporting that community and encouraging the dialogue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from—

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Kenora—Rainy River.

DEER POPULATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Recently there's been a great deal of discussion, both within and outside of this House, about the increased bear population across Ontario and the increased safety risks that we all face as a result of not having a solid bear management strategy. But another issue that northerners in particular have been battling for some time is a very high deer population, one that has moved into the downtown areas of our towns and cities.

The problem with these neighbours isn't that of mere inconvenience when they eat our gardens, but one of safety. I've heard many stories of collisions with vehicles, violent or erratic deer posing a threat to human safety and, of course, other predators, such as wolves, that can accompany the deer.

What's worse is that people don't know where to turn or what to do. It's becoming commonplace for municipalities in the north to allow bow hunting of deer within municipal boundaries. But as the city of Dryden discovered a couple of months ago, that has its own set of challenges.

In late July, a deer was struck in its spine with an arrow but did not succumb to its injuries. As result, that doe was badly wounded and couldn't care for her three fawns. Worse still is that no one would take responsibility for the deer. Police directed callers to the MNR and vice versa. The result is a tragic situation that isn't safe for anyone.

The Minister of Natural Resources cannot, and should not, try to abdicate his responsibilities to manage the deer population by essentially downloading it onto municipalities. I'm calling on the minister to do the safe and the humane thing and come up with a comprehensive deer management strategy today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from Kenora-Rainy River; I just had one of those moments. I apologize.

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POLIO

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize World Polio Day, which is an annual event organized by Rotary International. The good news is that, today, the world is 99.9% polio-free. However, as everyone knows in this House, we cannot consider the job well done until polio is eradicated around the world completely.

That is why, each year, Rotary clubs around the world continue to raise funds and awareness about this awful disease. To date, Rotarians have raised and donated the outstanding amount of \$1.2 billion, and they will continue to work with governments and community leaders to raise even more funds.

Here in Canada, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation each contribute to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative. This initiative generates approximately \$3 million. Mr. Patchett, the End Polio Now coordinator for Rotary clubs

in eastern Canada and the northeastern United States, stated, "The bottom line is this: As long as polio threatens even one child anywhere in the world, all children—wherever they live—remain at risk."

I want to thank Rotarians like my colleague the MPP from Etobicoke Centre for appearing at Toronto City Hall to raise the flag and raise awareness of World Polio Day, and all the Ontarians like Rotarian Jennifer Boyd, the president of the Toronto-Don Mills Rotary Club, and the volunteers and Rotarians in my riding of Scarborough-Agincourt, for their dedication to eradicating polio.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Last week in Drayton, I learned more about the great work our local health care professionals are doing. The Minto-Mapleton and Mount Forest Family Health Teams shared exciting developments in local telemedicine. Their innovative use of telemedicine in diagnosing symptoms means many patients now receive a diagnosis from specialists within days, not months.

For patients and their loved ones in small and rural communities, the growing use of telemedicine means less travel to see specialists in major centres. It means fewer expenses for gas, meals and hotels, and less vacation time used.

It's exciting to see how these advances in medical technology are revolutionizing local health care. Our local health care professionals in Perth-Wellington are leading the way, and they deserve our thanks.

We need the province to follow their lead in filling gaps where they exist. The doctor shortage is one example. Some of my constituents haven't had a doctor for over two years. We in Perth-Wellington need more family physicians, and will need even more in the coming years. I've spoken with many of our local health care professionals, and repeatedly I've taken our concerns to the Minister of Health.

We need to know that the government is taking this issue seriously and that they have an effective plan. We need the province to work co-operatively with local hospitals and municipalities, providing the resources they need. We need to see leadership at the provincial level like we're seeing at the local one.

ATTENTION DEFICIT
HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, is a neurological disorder that impacts over one million Canadians. Although it is one of the most common neurological disorders in Canada, it is often underdiagnosed and undertreated.

The Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada, or CADDAC, located in Markham, was founded in 2005 to address this issue under the leadership of Heidi Bernhardt, a constituent of mine. Acting as a national um-

brella organization, CADDAC strives to be a leader in advocacy and education for ADHD by participating in annual campaigns such as ADHD Awareness Week, which took place last week from October 14 to October 20.

Through events that inform and educate the public, ADHD Awareness Week seeks to dispel the myths and misinformation that have led to the negative stigma associated with ADHD. For example, one of the most common myths is that ADHD only affects undisciplined and overactive school-age boys, when in fact ADHD is actually complex, affects males and females differently and often becomes a lifelong neurobiological disorder that affects people of both genders and all ages.

Organizations such as CADDAC and campaigns such as ADHD Awareness Week are a step toward eliminating the stigma associated with ADHD. Having an informed public can help ensure that research and diagnoses are reflective of the facts and that those diagnosed have the proper supports to achieve their full academic, career and social potential.

YOUTH LEGAL SERVICES AWARD

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm very pleased to rise today, on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus, to recognize my colleague Barrie MPP Rod Jackson for being the recipient of the annual Youth Legal Services Award. This award is presented once a year by Justice for Children and Youth, a legal aid office representing low-income youth. It is awarded to an individual who has provided outstanding contributions to the lives of street-involved youth, both by supporting the Street Youth Legal Services program and by acting as a motivator and leader in reducing youth homelessness.

Rod Jackson and his staff will be honoured with this award tomorrow evening for his outstanding work on Bill 88, the Children and Family Services Amendment Act, more commonly known as the right-to-care bill. The right-to-care bill addresses a significant gap in the system that leaves some of Ontario's children in need behind. Bill 88 would allow a child in need at age 16 and/or 17 to access age-appropriate services through the child welfare system. Currently, 16- and 17-year-olds who are in need of assistance for the first time and try to access services within the child welfare system are directed to homeless shelters and Ontario Works. This can lead to these children struggling to stay in school, being at a higher risk of exposure to violent crime, and, in the worst cases, a higher risk of incarceration or hospitalization.

Rod Jackson's right-to-care bill would allow these 16- and 17-year-olds to voluntarily access age-appropriate services through that child welfare system, consistent with the Canadian charter and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. That is why Bill 88 is so important and why Rod Jackson is to be congratulated for bringing forward a solution to this troubling problem across Ontario. Congratulations to our—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 60, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / *Projet de loi 60, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): Your committee begs to report the following bill without amendment:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to alter bargaining rights conferred by pre-1980 working agreements in the construction industry / *Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour modifier le droit de négocier conféré par des accords de fait conclus avant 1980 dans l'industrie de la construction.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the bill is ordered for third reading.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

LANGUAGE TRAINING

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize English as a Second Language Week here in the province of Ontario. Every year during this special week, we

acknowledge the importance language plays in our daily lives. The philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once said, "The limits of my language are the limits of my world," and how very true that is.

For immigrants in our province, language is the doorway to understanding culture, participating in communities, and connecting with one another. Language is also the key to immigrants finding jobs and providing for their families.

Our government is committed to helping immigrants settle and succeed. This year alone, we as a government have invested close to \$67 million in tuition-free adult language programs that will help over 120,000 immigrants, new Canadians, improve their French or English.

Here's how it works, Mr. Speaker: After undergoing a language assessment, a learner is provided course options based on need, eligibility and language level, and then is referred to a tuition-free English-as-a-second-language or French-as-a-second-language course. Courses are offered at many levels and language abilities. These courses are available during the day, at night and on the weekends at over 300 locations here in our great province.

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School boards have the flexibility to offer training that addresses learners' needs in any of the four main language skill areas: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Depending on their needs and goals, learners who complete their training in ESL or French as a second language go on to use their new language skills for everyday life, finding a job or pursuing further learning such as bridge training programs.

ESL Week also a time to celebrate those who pass on the gift of language: our English-as-a-second-language providers and instructors in our Ontario public and Catholic district school boards. As a former ESL instructor, I know something of their world and the special qualities it takes to succeed in the classroom. We are proud to partner with them as they strengthen the skills of our immigrants and strengthen our great province of Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we're very proud of our ESL programs, and we remain committed to ensuring these programs continue to develop and evolve to meet the needs of our newcomers in this province.

Ontario is Canada's number one destination for newcomers. We have people from over 200 different countries, speaking over 250 different languages. This diversity is an incredible strength for us, both economically and socially. ESL Week reminds us that language is a bond that unites us as Ontarians and provides for a common understanding.

Our government is committed to helping newcomers succeed. So to all those who give and receive the gift of language, and help improve the opportunities for newcomers and their families, I'd like to say thank you on behalf of our government and all members of the Legislature. You are helping us build a successful, compassionate and united province where everyone—everyone—has the opportunity to connect, contribute and achieve their goals. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? It's now time for responses.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to respond to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration's comments on celebrating our English-as-a-second-language programs in the province of Ontario.

Last night, a number of my PC caucus colleagues, candidates from our side and our leader, Tim Hudak, were in Brampton celebrating Diwali. Diwali is the festival of lights, the conquering of evil by good. It was such a privilege to be part of a celebration like that, because it allows us to have a shared understanding with our friends from India, and it's just a beautiful, beautiful experience.

We live in a beautiful province, Mr. Speaker, not just because of the splendour of our geography, from the Canadian Shield in the north, to our farms that dot the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence basin, to the rivers and streams that make the province beautiful and rich. But we're also a beautiful province because of the diversity of our people. We celebrate and acknowledge the equality of gender, ethnicity and religiosity. We welcome people from all over the world right here in the province of Ontario, and it has enriched us in our lives each and every day, where we have this ability to have a shared understanding.

As people from all over the world enrich our lives and allow us to have a glimpse of their culture and their traditions, we as a province also offer them the opportunity to be full participants in Canadian life. Part of that is through our English-as-a-second-language programming that has taken place for many years in the province of Ontario.

ESL programs offer our new Canadians to be full participants in our society. It allows them to participate in our democracy, in our democratic process. It allows them to pursue economic liberty as well. They're able to use the language of business here in the province of Ontario; they're able to communicate in their jobs, in their communities, in their neighbourhoods, and even in their homes. This is an important thing that we can contribute back to our new Canadians, who have enriched us so much. I think it's a privilege to stand in a province and in a Legislature that celebrate our diversity like that.

I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to celebrate our diversity, to celebrate all that is good in the province of Ontario. I say that because I believe fundamentally that it's in stark contrast to what we're seeing in the province of Quebec. They're going through a period where they're actually questioning the use of religious headgear and religious symbols in their public institutions, and I'm so privileged and proud to stand in a Legislature that actually celebrates religious freedom.

I think that we have a lot to learn from people in other cultures, and they have a lot to learn about our customs and traditions as well, and it's that shared understanding that makes Ontario the best place to live in the world. I think that's what attracts so many people to our great

province, to enjoy the splendour and beauty of its geography and to celebrate the diversity and richness of its people.

Once again, I'm pleased and privileged to stand in this Legislature on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus to talk about the ESL programs that have enriched the lives of our immigrant communities, and I want to thank them for enriching our lives in return.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further response?

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, it's my privilege to talk about English as a second language here in Ontario. You know, when it first started being taught in the schools, not so much for the children but for the adults, it was quite a revolutionary idea, and there were many people in this province who did not like the idea of us spending money teaching adults one of Canada's two official languages. On the converse, there were even more people upset about having children learn their heritage languages, so that they could go to school to retain the language that they either had when they came to Canada or to retain the language that their parents spoke at home.

Many held those strong opinions, but today it is a given in this province that both of those were very good things. First of all, we know that people need to be able to communicate with the broader range of Canadians, in English and, in some places in Ontario, in French, and hopefully in both, if they're going to be really true Canadians, and that to teach them that second language, to perfect that language, is to give them a full chance not only to communicate but to participate in the life of Ontario and in the life of Canada.

And yet, even in spite of this, and even in spite of the money that the government is spending, there still remain problems with this program to this very day. I'd like to outline some of them that we see and some of them we're hoping the minister will take to heart in his responsibility—perhaps in conjunction with the Minister of Education—to try to alleviate, to try to do something about them, so that we can continue to remain proud of a program that is serving us well.

First of all, in terms of students: Throughout the province, as the minister said, there are some 300 programs, and in most municipalities and places they're working very well. But we have heard recently of some problems that are starting to manifest themselves in the region of Peel, and I would ask the minister to pay special attention to the region of Peel because that is a place where many, many immigrants are going. As he said, Ontario takes nearly half the immigrants coming to this country, and a great many of them end up in the region of Peel. But we are given to understand—and perhaps he can investigate this—that there has been a reduction in the number of students receiving the class in that region and that up to 50% are not able to get the classes that they require or need or get them in a timely manner. This is not a good thing. That's the first.

The second one is that I talk a great deal to the immigrant communities in my own riding—one of the larger

ones is the Bangladeshi community—and I feel that we are not doing enough to help that particular community, particularly the women of that community, in order to access English as a second language. I can't say it any better than the woman who came to me with tears in her eyes when she told me that she came to this country and this province and this city full of dreams and full of hope. She wanted desperately to break the cycle that she had in Bangladesh. She wanted to come here because she felt with all her heart that she could accomplish great things. But she had children, and because she had children, it was impossible for her to get English as a second language because she had no means of getting child care for them.

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She was a new immigrant. Her husband was struggling, working two jobs, and was hardly ever home. She had to be there. She did not have the wherewithal to access English as a second language. She said her coming to this country was not the blessing she had hoped it would be. Her dreams have been shattered. First, she cannot get daycare or child care; therefore, she cannot learn English. Because she cannot learn English, she cannot upgrade her other educational skills and get the kind of job she hoped and always dreamed she would get. She aspired to be a lawyer, and she said those dreams are not coming true.

I would ask the minister to look at that. If we're going to provide ESL, we need to provide child care for women to access it.

Last but not least, in terms of the teachers, we are also told, again going back to Peel region, that some teachers in Peel region have lost their jobs because of the cut-backs. I would suggest that, rather than losing those teachers, we need to make sure they're put into other places, but more especially, make sure they're there so that the 50% of students who are not now accessing the program that we consider vital here get it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I believe you'll find that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allocated to each caucus to speak and recognize Yad Vashem.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I seek that unanimous consent, I just wanted to thank the Clerk and the table officers, the Sergeant-at-Arms, and security and staff for seeing to the comfort of our special guests.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that it's traditional that the Speaker would introduce special guests, and that would be our Consul General of Israel. We are glad that you're here. Welcome.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is seeking unanimous consent for all three parties to speak—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): —let me finish the sentence, will you, please?—for up to five minutes on Yad Vashem. Agreed? Agreed.

YAD VASHEM

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, in a ceremony at Queen's Park earlier today, we recognized and honoured 10 Holocaust survivors whose stories of anguish, suffering and survival of both body and spirit are a testimony to the human will to live. These Holocaust survivors who are in the House today came to Ontario, rebuilt their lives and were honoured for their wonderful contributions as citizens of Ontario. Those honoured are Martin Baranek, Joe Betel, Helen Bleeman, Judy Cohen, Alzbeta Friedman, Frank Junger, Fay Kieffer, Joe Leinburd, Bill Nightingale and Rose Zimmerman.

Today, we recognize Yom Hashoah V'Hagvurah, Holocaust Memorial Day, which is really held earlier in the year, but because of various circumstances this is when we could schedule it. It's a day designated for Holocaust remembrance in communities around the world. This is the 20th year that the Ontario Legislature has observed Holocaust Memorial Day, and I'm proud to say that Ontario was the first jurisdiction in the world, outside the state of Israel, to officially recognize it.

As we mourn the deaths of the six million victims, we also celebrate the lives of those who survived. I have visited Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem many times. The memorial is dedicated to preserving the memory and the story of each of the six million people who died in the Holocaust. As a Jew, these memories strike the heart and the soul. Every Jew is touched by the Holocaust. We lost loved ones, family members or friends. All members in the community lost someone. The Holocaust echoes throughout generations. The loss is extraordinary.

At Yad Vashem, that loss is made real. It is concrete. You can touch it. In the Valley of the Communities, you stand before wall after wall, carved out of solid rock, listing the names of more than 5,000 communities that lived, breathed and had life, in which men and women loved, married, raised children, worked, laughed and worshipped. Today, in most cases, nothing remains of these Jewish communities except for their names, forever frozen in the bedrock of Yad Vashem.

It was there that I found the name of the city where my father was born, Czestochowa, and the city where my mother was born, Sosnowiec. The Holocaust reaches out of the past and touches the shoulder of every Jew.

For years, survivors walked among us with tattoos to mark the horror they had lived through. Their stories, their scars and the numbers carved callously into their skins made the Holocaust real, personal and powerful for generations to come. There are fewer and fewer survivors still living. Fewer people are telling first-hand accounts of personal experiences. Soon, the tattoos will be seen only in pictures, movies and museums, while the stories slowly fade with them—the hard-learned lessons for those who had survived, rebuilt and risen up.

The central theme of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, 2013, is, "Communities Together: Build a Bridge."

Holocaust Memorial Day commemorates all who died in the Holocaust, not just Jews. We also remember those whom the Nazis targeted for their race, their religion, their politics, their disabilities or their sexual orientation. It's important to set aside time to remember all these victims whose lives were taken by the Nazis. In remembering, we bear witness to what these men, women and children endured.

Tragically, other genocides have followed since World War II—in Cambodia, Rwanda, Darfur and Bosnia. It's evident that we must continue our struggle to keep alive the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, approved by the United Nations 65 years ago in the shadow of the Holocaust. The declaration recognizes the inherent dignity and the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family as the foundation of freedom, justice and peace throughout the world. It called on the world to protect human rights by the rule of law.

We are indeed fortunate to live in Canada and in Ontario, but we must never take our good fortune for granted. We must guard our democratic institutions and democratic freedoms. We must appreciate, nurture and protect them, and we must constantly remind ourselves how easy it is to lose them.

On September 22, 2013, the annual Yizkor ceremony was held as part of the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem's mission to commemorate the six million Jewish souls who perished in the Holocaust and to educate future generations of Canadians about the universal lessons of this dark period in history.

On Yom ha-Shoah, Jewish communities around the world recite a brief traditional mourner's prayer, the Kaddish. I want to continue our tradition of saying Kaddish in memory of those people whose *yahrzeit* is unknown. On behalf of the victims, the survivors and their families, I would like to recite that Hebrew prayer that is something for which all people may pray, and I ask for unanimous consent to allow me to do that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York Centre is asking for unanimous consent to recite the Kaddish. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Prayer in Hebrew.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: One line of this prayer translates as, "He who creates peace in His celestial heights, may He create peace for us."

We must always remember so that the world will never forget.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that we have a moment of silence to commemorate those who perished in the Holocaust.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask that that would happen after the other two responses. Once we do that, we will seek that unanimous consent.

The member from Thornhill.

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Mr. Peter Shurman: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I'm going to call attention to the fact that you just introduced me the way you normally do, as the member

for Thornhill, because we refer to each other in this place by the names of our ridings or constituencies. I'm proud indeed to be the member for Thornhill on a number of levels, not least which being that Thornhill is home to the largest concentration of Jewish people in the entire province of Ontario, indeed, if not in Canada. Thornhill is now 47% Jewish. One of the things that I might call attention to is the fact that there isn't one person in Thornhill of that faith who has not been touched in some way by the Holocaust. But I also call attention to the fact that you introduced me by my riding name rather than my given name, because my name is Peter Shurman, as most people know. But what you don't know is that my middle name is Emil. Emil is a name given to me in honour of my paternal grandfather, Emil Shuermann. I never met him. Emil Shuermann and his wife, Elfriede Stern Shuermann, perished in Theresienstadt. They were starved to death by the Nazis. They, along with many other members of my father's family, are people that I never had a chance to meet. The Holocaust, to me, is a very, very personal topic, both as a Jew and as a member of a family of survivors.

I grew up with my father, obviously, for the first 20 or so years of my life. One of the things I know that our honourees today can understand very well, because they're so public in helping us remember what happened when we have no personal memory of our own, is that many survivors could not speak about what happened to them or what happened to their families. My father was one of those people. I could never ask questions, and I could never get answers. The one time that I actually poked through that veil was the only time in my life that I saw my father cry. I realized that there was no way in the world that I could ever get that information, so it's through all of you and through all of the other survivors, the people who, through Yad Vashem and other societies like it, bring us these stories, that I can understand what my own roots were about. I think that's true for many people, given the fact that six million perished in the Holocaust.

It's an important thing to recognize what Yad Vashem represents, why it is such an important organization in this day and age for me and all of the people in our sixties like me who were born immediately postwar, for my children and for their children. Holocaust survivors get thinner and thinner in their ranks every year. In the Jewish tradition, we wish our friends a *hundert-tsvantsik* yor. That's Yiddish for 120 years: May you live 120 years. None of you are at 120 years yet, but I hope you all make it, and I hope I do, too. But that's a long, long life to contemplate.

The point I'm trying to make is that in 10 or 20 years we will only be able to recount the stories and we won't have the blessing that each of you represents of having first-hand knowledge so that we can pass it along, because, as was said at the ceremonies today, it is only by passing this information from generation to generation that we keep the memory alive. It's only by looking at the positive that you have all generated in your lives, by

creating families, creating businesses, creating new life, creating, for me, the Thornhills of the world, the communities of the world, in spite of what the Nazis tried to do. It's that that makes us want to go on and makes us understand what "never again" really means. Yad Vashem is an organization that truly lives by that slogan, by that "never again."

Even here in wonderful Ontario, we see that hatred thrives, unfortunately. Very recently, I made a statement on this subject. In Thornhill, we saw, this summer alone, three distinct and visible cases of hate crimes. Swastikas cut into the greens of a golf course; swastikas sprayed on the hoods of cars in very predominantly Jewish neighbourhoods. I, myself, was the victim of hate—and I can't get into detail—right here in the Legislature of the province of Ontario this past summer.

The crimes have all been referred to various hate crimes units, but that doesn't stop the people who perpetrate them from thinking in those terms. It is an unacceptable thing in the province of Ontario in these times for us to tolerate anything like that. Ontario has come so far in promoting an inclusive society and culture; you represent the very best of it.

We have Jewish Heritage Month, which I was so fortunate to help sponsor with my friends from the NDP and the Liberal Party the member for Parkdale–High Park and the member for Eglinton–Lawrence. We have a resolution that passed unanimously that I presented to this Legislature condemning campus hatred through Israeli Apartheid Week. These are the stepping stones that we in Ontario have had to build to create in Ontario what I consider to be a pillar of cultural inclusion.

So with the help of organizations like Yad Vashem and with you, particularly, we can continue to fight hatred and bigotry in all forms. Never again.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm the only Christian Canadian gentile who has the privilege of addressing you and addressing us all for a Holocaust memorial. I think it's very fitting that I do. The first thing one needs to say, bearing all of those monikers, is "Mea culpa, mea culpa, mea maxima culpa," which is Latin and very Christian for saying "My sin, my sin, my most grievous sin."

I'm one of the lucky ones. I was raised in a social justice household where my father taught me very early that racism and anti-Semitism wasn't just something that happened during the Holocaust, although of course that was the most grievous evidence of it, but it happened right here. It happened in Canada. My father told me about a time in this very city where "No Jews or Dogs" was a sign on the Beaches boardwalk. He told me of the Christie Pits race riots—anti-Semitic riots is what they were. He told me about living through those. He told me about the kind of world that makes that possible.

I was also raised in a household that taught me a kind of Christianity which was the Christianity of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who lost his life also in resistance to the Nazi regime. He said very clearly when he was alive that the most important thing a Christian can do, living in this time, the time of the Holocaust, is to say over and over

again, "Jesus was a Jew." So I was raised with that kind of Christianity as well.

In fact, keeping up the tradition of my family, this summer I'm going to visit Poland. My children have Polish heritage. We're going to Auschwitz and Birkenau. Why are we doing that? Because I think it's important for my children to know about that heritage so that it never happens again.

I also had the privilege, this last year, of going to Israel. I went to the memorial at Yad Vashem. I have to say, for anyone who hasn't been there, you have to go there. There is nothing so profoundly moving: the Hall of Names, the Cattle Car, the Valley of the Communities—the destroyed communities—and the Garden of the Righteous Among the Nations. But I have to say, what was most moving for me was the Children's Memorial. "Places and names" is what the word means in translation from Hebrew, the names of the children, the places they were from, those children who were killed.

It's important to remember that at the time this was going on, Canada as a country turned away Jews who were seeking asylum. So when I say "Mea culpa," I'm saying it for all of us, because this is part of our history, too: what we did, and what we, more importantly, didn't do. As you know so well, for evil to go unchallenged is how evil thrives.

I now say it with an increased sense of the importance of saying it, because of the increased episodes of anti-Semitism. The member from Thornhill evidenced some of those. But the reality is that anti-Semitism is on the rise. It's on the rise around the world, so we ever have to be vigilant in all of our communities, whether we have one Jew or are 47% Jewish. It's we who have to be vigilant, so what happened to you will never happen again. Again, this is on our hands. This is in our history. This is part of our heritage as well.

I want to point to something that's happening right now in my community which sounds eerily similar. Our Parkdale Public School just lost 200 Roma students—200 Roma students—who have been deported, we think. We don't know. They disappeared. Nobody knows where they've gone. We know there is an active movement to deport Roma people from our city, and we don't know where—are they in hiding? Have they gone back to Hungary? Many of them were from Hungary, which has anti-Roma laws in place.

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I want to say thank you to our friends in the Jewish community and to our friends in synagogues, because the only people who have come to the defence of the Roma, other than those of us who have been raised and lucky enough to believe, in our bones, in social justice, are the folk in synagogues, Jews themselves who recognize that it was also the Roma people who were in the concentration camps with them. But that's going on as we speak, and the sense of impotence that one feels in the face of that, trying to find out—I tell all of the folk in my riding, if you know somebody who used to go to school with your child, find out where they are. Call the police if you

have to. Trace them. Keep track of them. Know where they are. That's so important. It's going on right now.

The theme that the Canadian Society for Yad Vashem is so vested in is "Remember. Reflect. Recommit." I want to say, on behalf of all of those who aren't Jewish, on behalf of all Canadians: That is what this day and your presence means to us.

Thank you for being here. Thank you for keeping the flame alive. Thank you for being you. Thank you, Martin Baranek. Thank you, Joe Betel. Thank you, Helen Bleeman. Thank you, Judy Cohen. Thank you, Fay Kieffer—I hope I'm saying these names right. Thank you, Joe Leinburd. Thank you, Bill Nightingale. Thank you, Rose Zimmerman. Thank you. It's your names. We need to remember your names, because that's what Yad Vashem does in Israel; it remembers names and also hands. With our hands, we recommit. With our voices and with our minds, we remember and we reflect.

Thank you so much for being here. We honour you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from York Centre is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence to honour the survivors and Yad Vashem. Do we have agreement? Agreed. Please rise.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their warm, thoughtful and meaningful words of encouragement and thanks, and I thank our guests for being here today one more time. I appreciate it very much.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

FISHING AND HUNTING REGULATIONS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm just reaching for the most recent petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty/Wynne government has drastically reduced the number of Ontario hunting and fishing regulation booklets available to the public; and

"Whereas regulations in printed booklets are the most portable and convenient format for outdoorspersons to consult in the field, while hunting or fishing; and

"Whereas in addition to the Internet being unavailable in remote locations"—hunting areas—"many Ontarians do not have Internet access, or prefer information in print rather than electronic format; and

"Whereas those who hunt and fish pay substantial amounts each year to purchase outdoor cards, hunting licences and fishing licences" and HST, "and it is reasonable to expect that a booklet explaining the regulations should be provided as a courtesy," as they once were; "and

"Whereas Ontario hunters and anglers need to access the most current regulations to ensure they enjoy hunting and fishing safely and lawfully;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask the Ministry of Natural Resources to respect the wishes of Ontario

anglers and hunters by providing hunting and fishing regulations in a booklet format," on request, "to everyone who needs one."

I'm please to present this to Kate, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

Mr. Rosario Marchese: "Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board is a provincial agency composed of unelected members unaccountable to Ontarians; and

"Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to unilaterally alter local development decisions made by municipalities and their communities; and

"Whereas the city of Toronto is the largest city in Ontario; and

"Whereas the city of Toronto has a planning department composed of professional planners, an extensive legal department and 44 full-time city councillors directly elected by its citizens; and

"Whereas Toronto's city council voted overwhelmingly in February 2012 to request an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board's jurisdiction; and

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the ability of the city of Toronto to handle its own urban planning and development; and

"Further, that the Ontario Municipal Board no longer have jurisdiction over the city of Toronto."

I sign this petition.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to bring a petition from my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt.

"Whereas Scarborough residents north of Ontario Highway 401 and east of Don Mills are without a rapid transit option; and

"Whereas a strong transit system is critical for increasing economic development and tackling income disparity; and

"Whereas this geographical area continues to grow and the demand for strong rapid transit continues to increase; and

"Whereas Sheppard Avenue is a major artery for automobile traffic for commuters travelling from suburbs to downtown Toronto, and travelling from suburb to suburb; and

"Whereas ground-level rapid transit would increase traffic, restrict lanes for automobiles, and add further risk for pedestrians and commuters at dangerous intersections along Sheppard Avenue; and

"Whereas demands for underground rapid transit along Sheppard Avenue have been part of public discourse for over 50 years; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario previously approved a plan from the city of Toronto to extend the Sheppard subway line from Downsview to Scarborough Centre; and

"Whereas an extension to the Sheppard subway line will require contributions and co-operation from the city of Toronto, the province of Ontario and the government of Canada;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To support the extension of the Sheppard subway line east to Scarborough Centre; and

"To call upon the government of Canada to contribute multi-year funding for the construction and operation of an extension to the Sheppard subway line."

I fully support the petition and I will give it to page Arianna.

CHRONIC OBSTRUCTIVE PULMONARY DISEASE

Mr. Frank Klees: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that deals with the cancellation of the respiratory rehabilitation program at Southlake Regional Health Centre. It reads as follows:

"Whereas more than 850,000 Ontarians live with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD (more than 70,000 in Central LHIN) and these numbers are climbing quickly; and

"Whereas COPD is one of the most costly chronic diseases in Ontario, currently responsible for 24% of emergency department visits and 24% of hospitalizations in this province; and

"Whereas respiratory rehabilitation is a Health Quality Ontario endorsed, evidence-based intervention that improves quality of life for people with COPD and other lung diseases while saving health care dollars; and

"Whereas due to lack of dedicated funding for lung health programs the respiratory rehabilitation program at Southlake Regional Health Centre—the only such program in Central LHIN—was recently cancelled;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to urge Central LHIN—and all LHINs—to develop evidence-based plans to address COPD and other lung diseases that coordinate resources and care across all levels of the health care system; and further

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to immediately work with stakeholders to develop a province-wide action plan for lung health to improve prevention, early diagnosis and patient outcomes, while maximizing the return on health care investment."

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support of this petition and give it to page Phoebe.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

"Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area."

I support this petition, will affix my signature, and give it to page Louis to deliver to the table.

1400

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I have a petition from the people of Ontario. It says:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013 by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

Obviously, I support this, will affix my signature, and send it down with Owen.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive

Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

"Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program's pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

"Whereas the Auditor General's No. 1 recommendation is for the government to 'formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative';

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I affix my name in full support, Speaker.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains"—that's all the cities in the world;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I'm going to add my name to the thousands that have signed and give it to Anal to be delivered to the table.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have a petition that's addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, signed by a number of individuals in Brampton, Toronto, Pickering and Scarborough. It reads as follows:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013 by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I support this petition. I'm pleased to sign the petition and to send it to the table with page Benjamin.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario—almost 800:

"Whereas current community care access centre personal support worker guidelines do not provide a clear indication of whether PSWs are allowed to support patients' activities outside the home; and

"Whereas patient health is best ensured through an active, healthy lifestyle that may involve activities outside the patient's home; and

"Whereas the spirit of community care includes patient access to their community's healthy lifestyle resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To enact all necessary statutes that would allow personal support workers and other community care access centre staff to support their patients and clients both in the home and in necessary activities in their communities."

I support this petition and will be passing it to page Jake.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: My petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in northwestern Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation."

I support this petition and will affix my signature and give it to Evan.

WASTE REDUCTION

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013 by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I fully support the petition, and I will give it to page Jack.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Sarah Campbell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's mineral wealth belongs to the people of Ontario;

"Whereas the people who collectively own these natural resources should stand to enjoy their benefits;

"Whereas Ontario's Mining Act presently calls for resources mined in Ontario to be processed in Canada, yet allows cabinet to grant exceptions to the clause;

"Whereas these exceptions ensure residents of Ontario are told why our resources are being shipped elsewhere—information that can be used to better plan for infrastructure and job training needs to ensure a more competitive environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To amend the Mining Act to ensure that people living in Ontario maximize the benefit of their natural resources."

I support this petition and will sign it and give it to Owen.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

COMPREHENSIVE PAY FAIRNESS ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ SALARIALE GLOBALE

Mr. Barrett moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act to promote fairness in all compensation paid to employees in the public sector as compared to the private sector and to address Ontario's debt through alternatives to public sector layoffs and government program cuts while reducing the fiscal pressure on the people of Ontario who are having trouble paying their bills / *Projet de loi 113, Loi visant à promouvoir l'équité en ce qui concerne la rémunération versée aux employés du secteur public par rapport à celle des employés du secteur privé et à s'attaquer à la dette de l'Ontario sans recourir à des mises à pied dans le secteur public et à des compressions dans les programmes gouvernementaux tout en allégeant le fardeau financier des Ontariennes et des Ontariens qui peinent à payer leurs factures.*

1410

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Toby Barrett: This Comprehensive Pay Fairness Act puts the spotlight on public sector compensation, not only wages but also pensions, vacation time, sick time, hours of work, gym memberships, dental, early retirement and job security, compared to the private sector. If you add up the perks, you're 30% worse off in a private sector job. I feel that's not fair, and it's expensive for our provincial budget. Don Drummond reported that half of government spending is on public servant compensation. That's \$64 billion a year out of the \$128-billion budget—taxes paid by private sector workers who, by and large, don't have pensions. They don't make nearly what the people they support make. People getting paid by taxpayers, in my view, shouldn't be getting a much better deal than the taxpayers themselves.

A comprehensive pay fairness division, something like a wage board, within the Ministry of Finance would be created to depoliticize negotiations and to collect, analyze, report discrepancies, any inequities or unfairness. If you read the bill—and this came up in question period this morning—this does not create a new bureaucracy. Under section 3(2), "Existing resources only," "The budget and staff of the comprehensive pay fairness division shall be drawn only from the resources allocated to the Ministry of Finance on or before the day this act comes into force."

Secondly, Speaker, there's a bit of a buzz out there that somehow this would circumvent collective bargaining. I made sure that this legislation enshrines the duties

when bargaining in the public sector. I'll read section 2(1): "Every public sector employer shall consult fully with the bargaining agents representing employees of the employer when bargaining for a collective agreement but also take into account the importance of ensuring the good fiscal health of the employer." This proposed legislation does have teeth. It will require arbitrators to take all of this into consideration in their rulings. The goal, again: Shine some sunshine on private versus public sector compensation, cut spending, cut taxes, cut the deficit, cut the debt, all in bringing back fairness in the whole system.

This week, I sent a letter to every MPP in Ontario, asking, "Will you consider a legacy of pay equity and paying down the debt?" As a fellow elected representative, I asked each MPP to consider our legacy as a result of our work in this House and in our home ridings. What concerns me at present is a legacy, a projected debt, of \$411.4 billion, as predicted by Drummond. I think that's fiscal year 2017-18. We cannot hand that down to following generations. If we can't pay that off—I'm part of the baby boom—I don't see how those who follow have a hope, unless we begin to ramp up some plans right now.

As we all know, half the provincial budget—half the government expenditures—goes to public sector compensation. That's \$64 billion a year out of a \$128-billion budget. We also know that civil servant compensation—again, including wages, pensions, benefits, early retirements, other perks—now comes in at 30% higher than that of comparable counterparts in the private sector. That means an inequitable allocation of \$19 billion a year over and above what public servants would be making at regular market rates.

This private member's bill, Bill 113, the Comprehensive Pay Fairness Act, would legislate a spotlight on these inequities and, again, through the collective bargaining process, head us in a direction of a more fair system, offering alternatives to layoffs, to furloughs, alternatives to wage freezes, to program cuts and future accumulated deficit. There is unfairness in public-private sector pay, a refrain I hear so often: "I'd like a government job—nine to five, six weeks' holidays, retire early with a nice pension." I might mention that this legislation also applies to MPPs. It applies to our wages, our form of RSP.

People have the perception that, generally speaking, public servants make more money than private sector workers, that they work shorter hours and they have a myriad of other top-ups and perks not found in regular work. By and large, that perception is correct. Over the years, significant differences have developed between wage, pension and other forms of compensation in the public sector as compared to similar work in the private sector. Some are more equal than others. We can understand people's concern when they see their taxes going to pay unaffordable government worker wages and pensions, especially when these people themselves, in many cases, don't have a pension and they don't make that kind of money.

The question is, why are people being paid by taxpayers getting a much better deal—again, pay, pensions, vacation time, job security—than the people who are themselves paying the freight? As well, in my office I've had meetings—unacceptable pay inequalities between union and non-union government employees, in addition to these public-private sector inequities.

Negotiators that drive up the compensation of unionized public servants—this could come at an expense. It comes at the expense of comparable non-unionized employees or private sector workers. There's only so much money to go around, and as a result, workers end up accepting reduced compensation. They could even lose their jobs as a consequence of the skewed allocation of resources.

Here's some research: The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the CFIB, used 2006 census data and found that not only wages were higher in the public sector but also non-wage benefits. They found "that government and public sector employees are paid roughly 8% to 17% more than similarly employed individuals in the private sector." However, "taking into account significantly higher paid" non-wage "benefits and shorter work weeks, the public sector total compensation advantage balloons past 30%." That's from the CFIB.

Canada's Fraser Institute conducted a significant examination into compensation differences between Ontario's private and public sectors. Research revealed that the public sector takes in more generous non-wage benefits than the private sector. Public sector workers in Ontario have higher rates of pension coverage, higher rates of defined benefit pensions, lower ages of retirement and lower rates of job loss than private sector comparables.

They report that public sector workers in Ontario receive both higher wages and likely higher non-wage benefits than their private sector counterparts. For example, 76.5% of public sector workers in Ontario were covered by a pension compared to 26% of private sector workers. It doesn't seem fair to me.

Of these workers who have a registered pension plan, 97.3% of public sector workers were covered by a defined benefit pension—not MPPs, as we know—compared to 53.5% of private sector workers. In addition, on average, public sector workers in Ontario retire over a year earlier—actually, 1.3 years—than private sector workers.

Finally, public sector workers face lower rates of job loss than private sector workers. In 2011, 3.9% of private sector workers lost their jobs in Ontario, compared to 0.7% of public sector workers. Again, does this seem fair?

Public servant labour costs now account for about half of all Ontario government program spending. As I mentioned, our budget this year—looking at about \$128 billion, which means that roughly 64 billion taxpayers' dollars are being spent this year on public servant wages, pensions and other forms of compensation. There's over a million public sector employees in the province, 70%

unionized—again, compared to 15% in the private sector. The total amount paid to civil sector workers in Ontario has jumped 46% since the year 2000.

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We know it's vital for Ontario to get its finances in order. Otherwise, we see no alternative. We're seeing it already: cuts to program spending like MNR. It eventually leads to layoffs and a lower level of government service. I am proposing some alternatives to this.

As well, continued financial mismanagement will lead to increasing unemployment, increasing debt-servicing costs and increasing taxation. Since 2003, the annual deficit of the province has increased. It's projected at \$30.2 billion in four years. The debt is projected at \$411.4 billion in the fiscal year of 2017-18. Again, to service this debt severely impairs the ability of this government to function, and leads to levels of taxation that are seriously impairing the ability of businesses to compete and for individuals to survive financially.

Again, why have things gotten so out of whack? Part of it is that the process of determining wages is dramatically different between the public and private sectors. Market forces and profit constraints provide the recipe to follow in the private sector; public sector negotiations seem to be based more on politics. Through the establishment of this compensation wage board, where comparables are explained and taken into consideration by arbitrators, we hope to take the politics out of this business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: As the member from Haldimand-Norfolk just said, what this bill essentially seeks to do is establish a division within the Ministry of Finance known as a comprehensive pay fairness division, to compare and essentially regulate public sector wages and make them comparable to private sector wages. I want to start out by saying that I think I understand the rationale a little bit behind this, and I want to stress: I think.

Municipalities have been pushing for recognition of ability to pay as a key criterion for municipal interest arbitration award decisions. In Kenora-Rainy River, there is much discussion about this, especially in municipalities like Dryden, where they have to pay for their own municipal police force and are finding it increasingly difficult to pay, especially with their financial situation recently and all of the other downloads that the Conservative government brought forward in the 1990s.

While there does seem to be some recognition of this fact, I don't think that we should be appealing to the lowest common denominator, which is what this bill does. As my colleague from Trinity-Spadina just said a minute ago, we shouldn't be making poverty a public right. I really liked that. I thought that was worth mentioning.

This bill does take the concept of ability to pay, and it takes it to the extreme. The fact is, in Ontario, interest arbitration is generally sound and has generally delivered

fair and equitable awards for workers who are denied the right to strike. A radical overhaul is not needed. I don't know that we should appeal, again, to the lowest common denominator. The reality is that there are certain costs of doing business, and no matter what kinds of negotiations there are, we can't erase that cost from the ledger.

I'd also venture to say that those costs aren't that high anyway, and certainly not high compared to all of the government waste. Why aren't we tackling that? How many hundreds of millions of dollars have been handed to Ornge and eHealth, and how much has been wasted at the Pan Am/Parapan Games? And let's not forget the \$1 billion-plus that we've spent on moving around gas plants just for the convenience of the Liberal Party.

The point is that there is a lot of waste, a lot of money that is being needlessly spent, and I think that if we crack down on this waste, we can rein in our spending and we can have a more favourable bottom line. The point is that we don't need to attack workers to get the job done.

The other point is, I find it a little interesting that the PCs are always talking about less government, less bureaucracy and lower costs, and yet they continue to come up with these kinds of strange bills, which is very much the case of what's going on here. It's a case of: They're saying one thing and really doing another.

The member says that—I just wanted to quote the section; I believe he quoted it too. It's actually subsection 3(2); I think he said it was section 2—and it states, "The budget and staff of the Comprehensive Pay Fairness Division shall be drawn only from the resources allocated to the Ministry of Finance on or before the day this act comes into force."

I've got a couple of problems with that. The first is, just what does he think the people who currently work for the Ministry of Finance do? Does he think they're just a bunch of people who sit around and talk at the water cooler and don't have a lot of things to do? I don't think that's the case at all. I think we have some very hard-working people in the Ministry of Finance.

The other thing is that a project of this scale is going to require more than just a few employees. Again, we don't have the resources for this. This is just some fancy rhetoric.

The other issue I have is that there's a real element of absurdity here. I mean, we have no way to compare the wages of some public sector workers with private sector workers. We had a discussion about this at caucus, and we were wondering how exactly you would compare the wage a police officer gets—who would you compare that person to?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A rent-a-cop.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Exactly. We're looking at, what, security, maybe mall security? Is that really what we should be paying our police officers, who put their lives in danger every single day? Should we be paying them minimum wage? I mean, I don't think we should. Other examples, of course, are firefighters and EMS workers.

I just want to wrap up and say there is a lot of waste right now. There are a lot of areas where we can target reining in spending and saving money, and ways we can just take control of the finances in Ontario. I think we need to spend our money wisely. We need to get rid of the scandals—and quite possibly, some would argue, get rid of the Liberals. But I think that the Financial Accountability Office, which is something we put forward in the most recent budget and which has passed, will help that.

I think this will just create more workers, at the end of the day, regardless of what it says. It's also disrespectful of the work that the people of the Ministry of Finance already do, and it's just not workable. So for those reasons I can't support this. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker. It is an interesting exercise to read this convoluted bill. I find it incomprehensible that a party on one hand says, "Fire people, slash expenses, throw them out, stop doing this," and yet the underlying premise here is that the private sector is better compensated. The underlying premise is simply false, and the member's cure for something where there is no disease is just another giant government bureaucracy that already replicates the work done by other people within the government. This is pretty close to insane.

For example—among the things this gives rise to—should we be setting the salaries of deputy ministers based on what the banks pay bond traders? Because there's a flip side to it. The member's whole point and purpose here is a race to the bottom. That's flat out not acceptable in our time, and certainly not to this government and certainly not to the people of Ontario.

The actual experience is exactly the opposite of what the member has alluded to. The most recent collective agreements with the two largest public sector unions in Ontario, the Ontario Public Sector Employees Union, or OPSEU, and AMAPCEO, the management union—both contracts include two-year wage freezes. The member's party has been standing up and saying, "We want an across-the-board public sector wage freeze." Well, compensation for the last two years has been zero and zero. You've got to take yes for an answer here. But it has been done without having to have a numbing government bureaucracy to just hammer away at something that's completely useless. It's done through negotiations with collective bargaining units, and it's been done through consensus within the broader public service that we, as a public sector, really need to do our part to get this province back to a balanced budget.

In fact, we are the only jurisdiction in all of Canada that, from the bottom of the recession in the fall of 2009, met every single one of its deficit reduction targets and is headed right back to balance in the year 2017-18. Indeed, Ontario is the only jurisdiction in Canada not merely to have met all of its deficit reduction targets, but to have exceeded the targets each and every year.

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In fact, it's why Ontario's balanced budget plan depends on \$6 billion in compensation restraint between 2012-13 and 2014-15. The restraint measures became effective at the end of the fiscal year, March 31, 2012, and they are in place until the province ceases to have a deficit. Additional organizations may be added by regulation.

Speaker, this is the proper and the ethical way to go about doing it. It doesn't serve your purposes to take the people who work for you, who build their careers in the public service, and just say, "I am going to hit with you a hammer, not because it's right, but because I can." It's that innate streak of nastiness that as a government we came in 10 years ago to change.

And change it we did. Right now, the Ontario public service is viewed as one of the 50 best places in Canada to work. That depends on treating your people properly, it depends on compensating them fairly, and it depends on being straight up and honest with them, something this government has done since day one.

In the last year, the broader public sector wage increase was 0.2%, roughly 1/15 that of the private sector.

Speaker, most of Ontario's revenues go to public sector compensation, so this measure that basically calls for a steady reduction in public sector compensation is really just a smokescreen for that extreme right-wing mantra that says all government is bad. We don't feel that way. Ontarians don't feel that way. We feel that government is a way in which we come together and pool our resources to help each other, and that's why this particular measure is ill-advised and does not deserve the support of this Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to commend the member, whose riding is Haldimand-Norfolk. He has always been committed to holding the line on spending. I'm here today sort of respecting that and the work he has put into this file and a couple of other files.

I think it's important to put some context around this. As I said before, having worked for over 30 years with General Motors of Canada and others, for about 10 years in personnel/labour relations, I have respect for the HR profession. I have a specialist degree in personnel/labour relations from the University of Toronto.

Bill 113 addresses a very important issue of fairness and balance, and that fairness and balance is really the context of what we're talking about today: more or less the ability to pay.

If I could put some frame around it from the historic perspective, it might be important to draw the comparison between the private sector and the public sector and earned entitlements. I think it's important to keep that balance. In other words, generally, the person on the street, the person I'm talking to, the person I represent, recognizes you can't spend more than you earn for long.

In general, across-the-board negotiations end up with something reflective of the cost of living. The issue here

is, when you start to exceed that—in fact, Don Drummond said it; the wonderful, highly respected economist Don Drummond said it. They have a structural deficit. He said that prior to the review of the public sector in the context of prior to the next election. That was back in 2011. What he meant there is that we're basically paying more than the growth in the economy. That's where you get into the structural deficit. This was not a political statement.

Now, I want to put some framing around this; I want to put a perspective on it. If you recall, back in the early 1970s it was the Trudeau government that introduced a public sector wage and price freeze, across-the-board wage and price freezes, as part of an election at that time. The economy was in trouble. Joe Clark talked about it, and then Trudeau implemented it.

More recently, and some of the members from the NDP should know this—I was a councillor in Durham at the time, and in the 1990s, the economy was going into the ditch slowly under the leadership of Bob Rae, now a Liberal. Whatever; that's history. But here is the issue: I was the chair of budget in the municipality, and we all got a letter. The letter said we were going to have what they call—

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Rae Days.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, it was long before Rae Days, as the member from Oshawa mentions. It was called a public sector restraints mechanism. They wrote to all the municipalities, and the treasurers and the mayors all got it. They were going to cut the transfer payments because their budget at that time was about \$48 billion and the deficit was \$12 billion. They had been spending money like an impaired sailor—some would say "drunken sailor"; it's probably not appropriate.

But here's the issue: Eventually the municipalities and AMO ganged up and refused to go along with it. They had a big meeting here in Toronto. Even the unions disagreed with it. What did they do? They opened up every single contract in Ontario, and from then on they've been in a third party status because they messed around with the marketplace of what's appropriate compensation.

That social contract just opened up every contract. So they've had their hands on it. The Liberals have had their hands on it. In fact, it was in the budget. And here is where I'll bring it back to that—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is important. This is the history here. This is a quote.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Now, listen up. I'm going to ask some questions after my statement. This is a quote. It's important that you listen: "We can't manage the deficit without addressing what is the single biggest line in our budget—public-sector compensation."

Who said that? The minister of finance—I think it was Dwight Duncan—in 2010. He knew it.

In fairness, I would say that Kathleen Wynne says it all the time, but again, the proof is that they never do what they promise. It's just discouraging here. They

promised to close coal plants. They promised to not raise taxes. They have—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, listen, if you had been here long enough you would know that what you said is wrong. I'd ask you to ask him to withdraw that remark, because he's actually misleading the House in his barracking.

Public sector compensation costs make up 55% of every dollar spent on programs, and prior to the recession the government had been exceedingly generous in handing out pay increases. Here's the history: 1991-95, 1.9%; 1996 to 2003, 2%; 2004-09, 2.9%. So it's about 1%; it's not much. But a 1% increase in spending represents, I believe, about a billion dollars. We've spent \$128 billion, so figure it out; it's about a billion dollars.

Here's the deal: More recently, they had this very aggressive fight with the teachers on Bill 115. Under Bill 115, they silently agreed to pay one of the teachers' unions a 2% wage increase. What does that cost? It costs \$112 million. Put it in perspective. All we want here is fairness and balance.

In the couple of minutes I have left—I don't have enough time to do this. If I could have more time, I'd complete it. In the past, the tradition was this: People in the public sector worked harder and it was an honour to work there. They were committed, they were devoted and they took it as their duty. I think of professions like the OPP, professors, doctors, nurses, researchers—the tradition was that they were generally paid less, and generally they were employed for a lifetime. It was expected that there would be loyalty with the employer, and they had a very respectable pension and benefits upon retirement. I would say that tradition has been lost.

I see glaring examples of it at the very highest level. Some of the bonusing going on to executives within the government—this is what I'm talking about. When I think of Chris Mazza—the guy should be in jail.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: The other member there has a few minutes to speak too.

There are other examples: Hospital executives are paid \$500,000, \$600,000, \$700,000—close to a million dollars, not being doctors. I'm not talking about the hard-working, straightforward, honest people who live in communities, buy homes and have their kids play minor hockey. What I'm talking about here is—they have it out of whack in the province of Ontario today. That's what this bill is about, and that's why I think the member from Haldimand-Norfolk is on the right track.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

1440

Ms. Catherine Fife: Where do you start? How do you follow an act like that?

It is my pleasure to rise today to raise our concerns and those of my constituents about this piece of unworkable legislation. It would appear that the member from Haldimand-Norfolk was inspired to bring this bill

forward due to his principled and steadfast dedication to fairness. It's right there in the title, so therefore it must be true. The Comprehensive Pay Fairness Act, just like most of the bills introduced by members from the PC caucus which have "fair" or "bold" put in there somewhere—but I think we do know that if you call something "bold," it doesn't necessarily make it so. I'm sure it's a coincidence, and I'm sure dedicated public servants like the members from the PC caucus who probably helped with this bill are not just interested in euphemistic, communications-friendly messaging. But let's just get down to the heart of what this bill brings to this House.

It is a very important debate, actually. It seeks to compare public sector professions to their equivalents in the private sector, except that those equivalents don't actually exist. This bill would create an enormous bureaucratic apparatus, something that the PCs rail against, day in and day out, right here in the Legislature.

Let's return to the first issue, of comparison. If this bill were to become law, what would the newly formed comprehensive pay fairness division within the Ministry of Finance do with police officers, for instance? Who would the new bureaucrats compare to police officers? Would they be compared to private security guards, who often barely make minimum wage? Is that what the people of Ontario expect? Is that what the member expects? Is that what the PC caucus expects—that police officers, whom they trust with their safety and security, would make minimum wage?

We've seen that the Liberal government actually agrees in some part with this sentiment, given that they recently amended the Private Security and Investigative Services Act to allow private security guards to work alongside officers from the OPP at the upcoming Pan Am Games.

After what happened at the G20 in 2010, Ontarians are concerned about the potential for the abuse of their civil liberties. Private security guards aren't subject to the same rigorous training and aren't given the same enormous responsibility as police officers, who are given the power of the state's monopoly of the use of force.

Aside from the Liberal government's desire to make them comparable, simply put, police officers do a job that isn't comparable to anything in the private sector, so how would the new comprehensive pay fairness division compare the compensation of police officers?

What about firefighters, for instance? The danger posed by privatizing fire services is something every Ontarian should be aware of. It crops up in the news every once in a while that a municipality, loaded down with additional costs due to downloading of services from the provincial or federal level, raises the prospect of privatizing fire services.

Here's a cautionary tale from the United States, where private fire services have been created. On September 29, 2010, in rural Tennessee, Gene Cranick and his family lost everything. Their house caught fire due to a trash fire that got out of control. The Cranicks lived beyond the city limits of South Fulton, and it's public policy there

that fire service is provided as an opt-in service. Mr. Cranick forgot to pay his annual \$75 fee in 2010. When the firefighters showed up at his house, his name wasn't on their list of clients, so they simply stood there and watched his house burn.

This is a true story. So I'm very happy to actually bring in and talk about the comparison piece here, because you cannot compare certain responsibilities in the public sector to those in the private sector. This tragic situation can't ever be allowed to happen in Ontario, and yet there's a possibility of privatized fire services.

Additionally, an increasing role for private firms in basic safety services, such as fire and police protection, prompts concern over training, procedures, reliability and accountability, and these are factors that must be considered.

This second point I want to discuss is that this bill would create a new, massive bureaucracy, the kind of bureaucracy that the members of the PC caucus scream about every day in this Legislature.

It was earlier today that this House heard debate on Bill 91, and the PC members screamed and shouted about the possibility of creating a new bureaucracy around waste diversion and recycling. Yet they support Bill 113, which would create an enormous new division in the Ministry of Finance. It's stunning, really.

It's the same argument they used to protest the creation of the Financial Accountability Office. "We don't need more bureaucracy," they said. Well, thanks to the hard work of New Democrats, that office now has been created, and it will stop the kind of spending scandals that Ontarians are more than tired of. It will stop them before they start, and I think that that's more than fair.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great opportunity for me to stand in the House today, alongside many of my colleagues, and provide some of my thoughts with respect to Bill 113, as it's called, the Comprehensive Pay Fairness Act. I've had the chance to review the bill, I've had the chance to look at some of the notes, but most importantly, I've had the chance to listen to the comments made by others who've spoken before me, starting with the member from Haldimand-Norfolk, who of course, as we will all know, is sponsoring this particular piece of legislation and has brought it forward. I listened very carefully to the comments that he had made. I will come back to some of the specific items in the bill itself, but I did want to reference a couple of the other points that I had heard.

The member from Kenora-Rainy River, in her remarks, did speak a little bit about the folks who work across the street at the Ministry of Finance. Speaker, just for a very quick second, as someone who serves, and is proud to serve, as the parliamentary assistant to Ontario's Minister of Finance, I can say with absolute certainty, in keeping with what the member from Kenora-Rainy River said during debate, that the staff—the women and men

who do work in Ontario's Ministry of Finance, along with all those women and men who work in all of the ministries here in the government of Ontario—are extraordinarily professional people who work very, very hard to ensure that Ontario remains the wonderful province that it is, so I wanted to echo the comments that the member from Kenora-Rainy River made, specifically as it relates to the folks who work at the Ministry of Finance.

I think I understand the origin or the motivation for this particular legislation. Notwithstanding the title—which I think is perhaps a little bit misleading, as has been mentioned by others speaking in the House today—it gives me a chance, reading through the bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Withdrawn. Sorry; you're 100% right, Speaker. Withdrawn.

Looking at the title of the bill itself, I understand that there's a certain inconsistency between the title and the alleged or so-called desired outcome. I think what's most important to recognize—and I did listen to the member from Durham when he spoke, and I do respect the experience he has in the private sector. I don't feel comfortable with the solutions that he has proposed in his comments or the solutions that you find in this particular piece of legislation, but I do respect the experience.

I think it's important to recognize that while I am, relatively speaking, new in this chamber, I am someone who very recently, like the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, had the chance to be out in my community in the course of an election campaign, like the member from Scarborough-Guildwood, the member from Ottawa South and some of the others. The one thing that strikes me about the message that I hear repeatedly from people in my community is that in order to move the province of Ontario forward, in order to continue to progress, in order for us to continue to be prosperous, in order for us to continue to be the best province in Canada, we have to find a way to emphasize those attributes that unite us, not those that divide us.

Laced throughout the discussion that I've heard today here in this place, particularly from the members of the Ontario PC caucus—let's call it the hidden message, a not-so-subtly hidden message, that the best way, from their perspective, to move the province forward and to build the most prosperous, and also most socially responsible, society is to find those wedges, those opportunities to say to the people of the province of Ontario, "Hey, someone down the street has something"—allegedly—"that you might not have, that you may not have access to, and the best way for you to move forward is for us to take something away from someone—your neighbour or someone living in a different part of the province." That seems to be at the very heart of the philosophical DNA that is exhibited in this particular legislation, and also in so much else of what we've heard from the Ontario PC Party—not just over my time in this place, but over the last decade or so, while they have found themselves with opposition status.

Perhaps, if I could—not to give them advice—repeatedly, the people of Ontario have said that we have built a phenomenal tradition in this province of making sure that we find ways to remain unified. We find ways not to be jealous or envious of what someone else may have or may not have, but we find ways to work together to move all of us up. That saying—the reason clichés are so popular, I think, is because they happen to be true—a rising tide lifts all boats.

In this particular legislation, and in the debate we've heard today, even though there are specific concerns, they call for remedies that aren't actually required. As the member from Mississauga–Streetsville said, when you contemplate that we are facing certain fiscal situations in the province of Ontario, you have to say to yourself—at least I say to myself—is this particular proposed legislation the prescription that's going to help us get from where we are to where we need to be?

1450

As the member from Mississauga–Streetsville said, we have a plan as a government, a plan that we've been working on for quite some time with respect to restoring Ontario's fiscal picture, to making sure that our economy is poised to continue to do well: since the depths of the global economic recession in 2008, the amount of jobs that we've created, all of the additional steps that we've taken to make sure that we keep investing in people, that we keep investing in infrastructure and that we keep working very hard to create a dynamic and innovative business climate here in the province of Ontario. The plan is working.

The Ontario Liberal government's plan is working for building a strong and robust economy, but as it relates specifically to the issue of what we spend on compensation for those operating or those working hard in the public service and the broader public sector, as my colleague said, that plan is working. For example, the government has concluded new collective agreements with its largest unions, OPSEU and AMAPCEO—the acronym is fairly long; the name is quite a bit longer when spelled out completely. Together, the contracts of OPSEU and AMAPCEO, the Professional Engineers Government of Ontario and the Association of Ontario Physicians and Dentists in the Public Service are projected to save a total of \$129 million over the next two years.

We have said that we recognize the challenges that exist for the province of Ontario fiscally. That's why there is no room in our budget for incremental increases. All of us must do our part to eliminate the deficit, and we are on track. Just recently, the Minister of Finance tabled the public accounts—the fact that the province of Ontario remains on track to balance our books by 2017-18, because we are taking the opportunity, Speaker, to make some very difficult decisions, but not in a manner that's out of step or out of keeping with Ontario's finest traditions.

We continue to work hard as Ontario Liberals on this side of the House to make sure that we strike the right

balance, that we find those attributes, those characteristics that unite all of us and that we work very hard continuing to invest in our future because it's the Ontario way. It really is the Ontario way to make sure that we work hard to remain united, to work hard, let that rising tide raise all boats. That is the best way to move the province of Ontario forward; it's a plan that's working. That's why I don't feel comfortable supporting this particular legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is an interesting debate, and I think it deserves a little squaring up, too. Let's remember exactly what this bill is attempting to do. Right now, the projected debt of our province in 2017 is going to be \$411 billion. That's a number that people can't even begin to comprehend.

Let's talk about a billion for just one second. One second, speaking of a second—a billion seconds ago, the Roman Empire was in full swing; a billion minutes ago, we're in the Stone Age; and a billion hours ago, dinosaurs roamed the earth. That's just what one billion is; imagine 411 of those.

Right now, we've seen nothing from this government trying to actually remedy that—no discussion on difficult decisions that need to be made. The member opposite just finished talking about fairness and “a rising tide raises all boats.” Let me tell you a little story about a woman in my riding. Her name is Monica. I went to her house and I knocked on her door and she said, “I want you to see something.” She took me into her kitchen, and she had several jars along her kitchen table. Each one of them had money in it. She said, “This is the jar for my rent. This is the jar for my food. This is the jar for my entertainment. This is the jar for my power, my hydro. This is the jar for all my expenses, and if I have anything left over, I can go see a movie or do something to entertain myself.” And you know what? When she runs out of money for groceries, she has to go dip into her money jar for her rent. This is a woman who works at a full-time job, who is 60 years old; she has worked full-time her whole life, paying the wages of public sector workers.

When we're talking about fairness, we need to talk about what we're going to do to the thousands of people who line up at Christmas Cheer—the working poor that show up for Christmas Cheer and are paying those wages that are 30% more than the private sector earns.

It's a bit of a push to suggest that we're going to privatize fire services or we're going to pay police officers the same as security firms. Come on, really? That is just ridiculous; to even suggest that that's what the member from Haldimand–Norfolk is suggesting is outrageous. We need to remember exactly—

Interjections.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Well, what are your ideas? The alternative here, to save money, is going to be to go to layoffs, mass layoffs, furloughs, to have wage freezes, program cuts. We need to start looking at other options

here. What the member from Haldimand–Norfolk has done has provided us with an alternative and another option. It's worth debate. It's worth debate because right now, we haven't heard anything—you know what? The members opposite and the members to my left, their answer is to throw more money at it. You talk to anyone in the health care industry, you talk to anyone in the social welfare industry, community and social service, and they'll tell you that there's enough money there already. What they're not doing is being efficient. They're not spending the money properly. Start looking at alternatives on how to get your act together to be able to pay down the \$411-billion debt that you're going to have in 2017.

The Fraser Institute, as the member also mentioned, said that we need the establishment of a wage board to build a comprehensive pay fairness division in the Ministry of Finance. It is extremely rich for the members across, who just established 36 boards and panels to study things, to talk about another big bureaucracy. It's even richer for you guys to talk about it, because that's what you live off of, is bureaucracy. We need less bureaucracy, and we need more getting things done.

Let's talk about getting things done. What did we get elected to do? To get more people to do things for us? No. At some point we have to take accountability for ourselves and be willing to take up the cause and have the courage to talk about alternatives other than just throwing money at problems. Your own former Minister of Finance said that if we don't address how we compensate people in the public service, we're going to be in serious trouble. This bill, if nothing else, is a great start of having a real conversation about what we're going to do about paying the public sector service workers and making sure they have a job by the time 2017 actually comes around.

Hats off for him for having the courage to start that discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to have a minute and a half to jump in this debate. It has been interesting, to say the least.

The member from Barrie just mentioned the former finance minister of the Liberal government. I will mention that the former finance critic from the PC party mentioned that \$115,000 as a base salary for an MPP was not enough. It was not enough for him. So there is some variance between what they believe and what they actually are proposing.

I would say also, Mr. Speaker, that the top 10 CEOs in North America last year made over \$100 million. Are we going to compare that private sector with our public sector? I know that our public sector CEOs would gladly take that. For us to handcuff our fundamental ability in this chamber, our duty, our responsibility, to bargain, to negotiate with our public sector, to come to a valuation that represents, again, a responsible remuneration and compensation package—that's our responsibility. If they

want to abdicate that responsibility, then they can do that. Go join the private sector. Get out of here. Go away. Go work in that sector. We want to take that responsibility seriously. We're willing to do it. We've always done it in good faith. That's the way that this House should operate: under a good-faith principle, in fairness and equality, not pitting workers against workers, as this bill would suggest we do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I wish to thank everybody for the debate this afternoon. My proposed legislation, the Comprehensive Pay Fairness Act, does adopt an idea from Canada's Fraser Institute, the establishment of what they refer to as a wage board. I identify mine as a comprehensive pay fairness division, as I explained, to be created within the Ontario Ministry of Finance. As we know, this legislation makes it very clear that existing resources are to be used. It does not create a new bureaucracy.

This proposal—much of it is based on research done by both Fraser and also CFIB. This pay fairness division would work as an independent, transparent body responsible for collecting, analyzing and reporting public sector compensation compared to private sector equivalents. Again, the goal is to take the politics and the bias out of the process and to better enable us to match wages to projected government revenue and expenditures.

The pay fairness division would also present information on recent arbitration rulings and collective agreements in both public and private sector labour markets across Canada. So it has teeth. Arbitrators would be required to consider these comprehensive compensation comparables.

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I wish to point out as well, in case there is any confusion, that the legislation indicates government's responsibility and objectives to fully engage, consult and conduct genuine and constructive negotiations with public sector workers with respect to these changes with respect to collective bargaining and compensation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Liberal Party of Ontario should be required to reimburse taxpayers \$950 million in compensation for the Liberal government's decision to site two gas-fired power plants in Mississauga and Oakville despite local opposition, then wasting millions of dollars by making a political decision to cancel them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: In his second appearance before the justice committee, the former Premier insisted that his government did all the big things right. Respectfully, this is far from accurate. Among the big things that government must get right, none is bigger than the duty to place the interest of the public before the interest of the party. The former Premier is certainly within his rights to focus on polishing his legacy to the exclusion of the real world, but the fact of the matter is he should now be crystal clear to the people of Ontario.

In their hunger for a majority government, the party opposite traded principle for power, and did so at great cost, both a steep and unnecessary financial cost but also at a terrible cost to the public trust, which it has damaged beyond measure. This damage was magnified by the fact that the Ontario Liberal Party had gone to great lengths to promote the idea that their government trusted in independent expertise, that the best decisions are driven by evidence and free of partisan bias. The betrayal of those principles by the party opposite lays bare its belief that this idea mattered only as far as it helped to further the selfish political interest. They were just empty words, just window dressings.

You can forgive the public for imagining that your parties opposite stood for something else. In 2004's Electricity Restructuring Act, the Liberal government went to great lengths to reshape the energy sector. It created the independent Ontario Power Authority in an attempt to keep energy policy stable, objective and non-political. But as we have seen in the gas plant scandal, the party opposite was willing to discard long-term planning when it no longer suited their short-term purposes. In the 2006 Planning and Conservation Land Statute Law Amendment Act, the Liberal government impaired municipalities' rights to site plan approval for the locations of energy projects. With section 23 of that act, the Liberals went out of their way to give themselves power to locate power plants wherever they choose.

The member from Oakville defended this measure against the objections of two Conservative committee members, my colleagues from Oxford and Nepean-Carleton, as well as the NDP member from Beaches-East York. This clout allowed the Liberal government to site wind power projects wherever they wanted. It allowed OPA to tell bidders that municipal opposition to a power plant would not be considered in its evaluation of their proposals. Local opposition didn't matter. The government had insulted its decision-makers from the public.

On October 7, 2010, the Oakville power plant was cancelled, allegedly because the generating capacity was no longer needed. The government's press release noted, "When the need for this plant was first identified four years ago, there were higher-demand projections for electricity in the area. Since then changes in demand and supply ... have made it clear that this proposed ... plant is no longer required." No longer required, Speaker? Yet the capacity is now being replaced at a premium.

Three years after it was buried, that plant is very much alive, relocated and more expensive than ever, and the

member from Oakville, the \$675-million man, was re-elected. On September 28, 2011, the Mississauga plant was cancelled. At an announcement for the cancellation of the Mississauga plant, the member from Mississauga South, now the Minister of Finance, was joined by three other Liberals: the members from Etobicoke Centre and Etobicoke-Lakeshore, as well as the candidate for Mississauga East-Cooksville—candidates whose seats were directly at risk.

The Toronto Star reported at the time that the Liberals "repeatedly stressed that the Progressive Conservative Party has not addressed the power plant issue during the campaign and that if one of the other parties wins, the plant could go forward."

These cancellations were made for partisan gain in hopes of forming a third majority government. In February of this year, the Premier admitted—of the cancellations—"It was a political decision." As we have learned, she would know because the Premier was co-chair of the campaign that made the decision to cancel the Mississauga plant. It is her signature on the cabinet document authorizing the plant cancellations.

If the cancellations weren't politically motivated, the Liberals would have taken the time and care to ensure they got the best deal for the taxpayers in breaking a contract of this magnitude. But waiting would have put five seats at risk, so they rushed recklessly to do whatever it took to defend the partisan self-interest.

It is astounding and, quite frankly, appalling, Speaker. There are millions of people unemployed and countless more giving up hope of work, and the government is spending at least \$9 billion a year that it doesn't have. In the face of those facts, the party opposite thought it was perfectly fine to saddle Ontarians, businessmen and families with another billion dollars-plus in debt, even when that billion dollars was squandered in the direct services of partisan gain.

This motion calls on the Liberal Party of Ontario to reimburse taxpayers \$950 million for the politically motivated decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants. The \$950 million represents \$270 million for the cancellation of the Mississauga power plant and \$675 million for the cancellation of the Oakville plant. These are estimates of net cost developed by the Auditor General, and the numbers stand in striking contrast to the costs Liberals repeatedly insisted were accurate. They pegged Mississauga at \$190 million and Oakville far lower—just \$40 million. Taken together, they are less than a quarter of the cost that the Ontario Auditor General has attached to the cancellations.

I want to highlight the crux of the matter. The Liberal government authorized unelected political staffers to bend to the demands of the campaign team and take control of negotiations with TransCanada Energy, to cut both the OPA and the Minister of Energy and their legal teams out of the loop, to give away the farm and to start the Oakville negotiations with the promise that TransCanada would be "kept whole," as if they imagined that they were high rollers in a movie. Why, you ask,

Speaker? So that, in return, TransCanada Energy would lay low and not start legal action against the government.

Political staff, instructed by the campaign team, voided the carefully crafted terms of the original contract. They were shockingly naive, ignorant of contract laws, reckless and rushed, and it was entirely avoidable. As it turned out, the Auditor General discovered that without the political interference and with the guidance of legal staff and OPA on the cancellation of the Oakville plant, it may well have been possible for the OPA to wait it out with no penalty or cost because the original contract had an exit clause in case local opposition made plant construction impossible. Had political staffers consulted a lawyer, they would have known that by simply waiting a few months, they could have avoided hundreds of millions of dollars in costs. But had the Liberals waited, they would surely have lost the seats in Oakville and Mississauga.

So the party opposite ignored the OPA, the institution that it created and which it entrusted to ensure that power supply decisions are made in the broader public interest. In that same report, the OPA notes, "Estimating the cost of relocating the plant during the settlement negotiations was complicated by the short time period the OPA and Infrastructure Ontario had to negotiate a deal—12 days (we note that it typically takes 12 to 18 months to develop estimates when competitively procuring a gas plant)"—12 days. The gross cost of that closure, according to the Auditor General, was over \$1.1 billion. It goes without saying that, had the party opposite succeeded in winning a third majority, none of this would have come out. If they were compelled by conscience, they were driven into the shadows, not the light.

1510

This is a government that has practically had to be waterboarded before it would open its books. In the years following the last election, we saw a senior cabinet minister stonewall a parliamentary committee and demonstrate contempt for members' rights and the people of Ontario. This was an individual who many had seen as a potential future Premier, and the actual Premier resigned and locked the Legislature behind him.

They made this up as they went along. They knew this behaviour to be shameful, and past scandals had made them secretive. They kept no notes of meetings, operated in a verbal culture and gave gas plants code names that helped them evade freedom-of-information requests. They whited out documents, wiped BlackBerry PINs, deleted email accounts and erased hard drives—all of this despite creating a law, the Archives and Recordkeeping Act, which made such activity illegal. They violated the spirit and the letter of legislation they themselves created, because it was inconvenient.

Is it any wonder that the government is eager to turn this page? The party opposite won the seat, but has lost the trust of the Ontario people. The people of Ontario, quite rightly, feel abused by this government. The legacy of this party opposite will be permanently tarnished

unless they pay back the funds they have taken from the public purse for purely political gain. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to rise today on this motion, motion 46, on reimbursement of the gas plant cancellation costs. It's hard to disagree with many of the chronological points that the honourable member from Burlington has put forward. We know there was a history of a failed gas plant, a politically motivated cancellation, the refusal to release documents that related to the motives of that cancellation, then the prorogation to hide and deflect from this scandal, the ensuing quitting—leaving—

Interjection: Resignation.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Resignation is the word. Merci. Les mots, ça vient en français mais des fois, en anglais, je les perds. The resignation of the Premier, the resignation under duress of the then energy minister—I would also suggest that the former finance minister resigned under the terrible light of this scandal.

So, they have paid somewhat of a political price, and that's what I think politicians ultimately fear the most: the political price, the damage that comes with the massive enormity of this scandal. But this motion today, I would like to state categorically, will not get the money back from the Liberal Party. It is impossible. The member's motion is non-binding. The government will bury it. They will never refer to it.

Even out of the goodness and kindness of their hearts, even if they had a wonderful staff person—a chief-of-staff person, as the Prime Minister had, who decided to give \$90,000 to repay Mr. Duffy—even if the Liberal Party had one of those, I doubt they would find it in their hearts to repay the billion-and-a-half dollars.

So it is a symbolic measure, and I rise today, I guess, to have a little bit of fun with it, because it's something that, in all seriousness, will not deliver that money back to the coffers of the province and back into the pockets of the taxpayer.

I wonder why the member took this time to bring a motion forward rather than put a bill forward that maybe could have had some effect, a bill that would have bound past, present and future governments to repay all their expenditures that were found to be wasteful. Why not put one of those forward? Let's get a bill that says, "All governments, past, present and future." Let's cover all the bases here so that if the public finds that there has been an abuse of trust, an abuse of funds, it comes out of the pockets of the party responsible. I would like to see that—something that's tangible, something that has legislative teeth. That would merit the time that we're going to spend on this bill. In essence, this is simply a bill filled with an ability for the member, and rightfully so, to reiterate the failure of this government when it comes to energy planning and the political nature of the decision to cancel those gas plants.

I sat on the justice committee as we tried to get down to the bottom of it and we tried to deliver some answers

for the people, for the general public, for those communities that were affected and for all taxpayers. Thankfully, at this point we have.

Unfortunately, we've gone through seven by-elections now, and lo and behold, the Liberals have won three of the seven—three of their own seats back. So we're not able to get that message out. I guess it's not being reinforced enough. What's unfortunate is that we see a message that is being curtailed by the Liberal government in terms of spin. They've continued to try to change the channel on the gas plant cancellation—

Interjection: Imagine that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Absolutely—when all we really want here is the truth—and that's what the people expect; that's what we've worked hard to deliver—and some protection.

I'm very proud to be a part of an NDP caucus that brought about not only the truth in its work with the opposition in committee to get down to the bottom of the cancellation of the gas plants, but also a mechanism that does work into the future, the Financial Accountability Office, mirrored on the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Kevin Page, who did such great work in highlighting the massive discrepancies between what federal budget projections were and what actual costs were. We only have to look so far as the F-35 fighter jet cost evaluation, where the federal government proposed it was going to be an \$18-billion or \$20-billion endeavour. Ultimately, we know, this purchase, this procurement, would and could cost the federal coffers \$60 billion. Now we have that mechanism here in the House, and I would think that the members of the PC caucus would applaud that measure of oversight, that ability for present and future governments and parties to be fully scrutinized on their expenditure. That's what people want. They want us to fix these problems.

The damage is done. The cancellations happened before—unfortunately, they happened under a majority government. You had full rein to do whatever you wanted. You don't have that any longer and I'm proud to have been part of a caucus that has at least stopped the wasteful spending that has happened under the Liberal tenure. But now it's time to fix the problem with real, tangible legislative measures like the Financial Accountability Office.

Unfortunately, this motion today is really not something that will have any long-lasting effect. It might be good for today, it might buy a couple of headlines, but certainly I won't expect any of the members opposite to start cutting cheques. If you do, out of the kindness of your heart, feel as though you should repay the people of the province, that would be fine. I'm certain treasury board would accept your cheques. Unfortunately, I don't think that's going to happen, but I certainly look forward to the comments from other members in the House today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Bob Delaney: One of my personal role models in the Legislature, former finance minister Greg Sorbara,

once told me, "It's okay to be hard on the issues—in fact, that's what we're here for—but it's wrong to go after the people." Greg said that the only things he ever regretted were those occasions where he gave over to the temptation to treat other elected members or their parties with anything but courtesy and respect.

The political staff in every party, from time to time, try to find a member inexperienced enough to launch a personal attack on either peer MPPs or their parties, and it is into this trap that the member has fallen. She didn't write her monologue. This is not her measure. She just stood up and read the notes. Of all the dumb and unnecessary personal attacks that Conservative MPPs are all too prone to, this ranks right down there with the dumbest. But if this member—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

1520

Mr. Bob Delaney: Withdrawn.

But if this member, whom I otherwise like and respect, wishes to open that door, maybe we ought to show her what else we can drive through it. The member for Essex, I think, alluded to just this.

No Ontario government in history bungled and loused up the energy file worse than the Harris-Eves Conservatives did in those eight long, lost, retrograde years between 1995 and 2003.

The cost of electricity bought on the US spot market at prices up to \$1.50 per kilowatt hour and resold to Ontario ratepayers at a loss at 4.2 cents per kilowatt hour: \$1 billion. Billed to the Ontario PC Party, as this member herself suggests, that would be approximately \$654 per Tory voter or roughly \$25,000 per card-carrying member of the Ontario PC Party.

The cost of nakedly partisan taxpayer-funded government advertising dressed up in PC Party blue colours and adorned with photographs of the PC Premier and cabinet ministers of the day: \$500,000. Cost to the PC Party: about \$327 per Conservative voter or around \$12,500 per card-carrying PC Party member.

In the fall of 2003, the Ontario PC Party shredded all their records for the ministry, for cabinet, for everything. They shredded all of their records after the voters drummed them out of office, and left a legacy \$5.6-billion budget deficit. This was on a budget they claimed was balanced. For that reason alone, Ontarians should never, ever, ever again trust Conservatives with money, and the PC Party ought to give it all back. Cost per PC Party voter: \$3,733; cost per card-carrying Ontario PC Party member: \$140,000 each.

And, Speaker, the great-granddaddy of all government boondoggles is the Gong Show the Harris Conservatives made of a botched effort to replicate the worst of 1990s US-style greed in privatizing electricity production and transmission with a failed privatization of Ontario Hydro. They tried to unload the assets and stuck the accumulated hydro debt on to the taxpayer and then never paid down a cent of it. You can see it all documented in the 2010 Auditor General's annual report. Cost to Ontario fam-

ilies: \$23 billion. The PC Party members ought to have the courage and the decency to pay that back. Cost per Conservative voter: \$15,333; cost per Ontario PC Party member: \$575,000.

Speaker, the Ontario PC Party has racked up a debt to the people of this province of at least \$30.1 billion, and that doesn't even include the budget deficits that they ran. Put another way, this is a payment from each PC voter of \$20,066. Given this PC Party's woeful financial track record, I'd suggest that if the crown is serious in seeking payment, they ask for a certified cheque. But if we seek to recover the costs of this policy incompetence among card-carrying Ontario PC Party members, this would be a \$725,500 bill per card-carrying PC Party member.

Now, Speaker, the above does not include any of the following: the \$150 million spent filling in the Eglinton subway; making the dumbest privatization sale in the history of the world with Highway 407; dumping the cost of mindless tax cuts to profitable corporations and wealthy individuals on to municipalities and poor people through downloading and benefit-slashing; losing more than 26 million school days through provoked labour disputes with teachers; closing 28 hospitals; firing 6,200 nurses; cutting meat and water inspectors—and the list just goes on and on and on and on. Physician, heal thyself.

Our city of Mississauga took nearly three days to get all of its power back 10 years ago. That means nothing to Ontario Conservatives, but access to reliable electricity means a lot to all of us in Mississauga and in my seat-mate's community of Oakville.

I hope that following the disposition of this truly silly and malicious motion, the member will use her next opportunity to do something productive or positive for the people of Ontario and for the people who sent her here to do better for them than she has done today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up. I think, actually, just the tenor and tone of that last stand-up is disconcerting, because this debate has fallen to the lowest common denominator: Who is more scandal-ridden, Liberals or PCs? It is demeaning to the people whom we serve, because, actually, people are still angry about the gas plants. I don't know if any of you were paying attention to the justice committee this morning, where the former finance minister said, "The public has lost interest in the gas plants," as if, by saying so, it would just go away.

It always amuses me, too, when Liberals come out and say, "Listen. We want to change the channel." That's what you say in the backrooms; that's a strategy. It's patronizing to the people of this province, and I think that you've underestimated the anger that people have. If you talk to cab drivers, if you're at the grocery store, if you're at the playground with your children, people are angry, and they have good reason to be angry at this waste.

The motion that has been brought forward—you can understand the rationale behind it because people want

justice. The arrogance that the former finance minister brought to the justice committee this morning was absolutely—it's stunning for him to say, "This isn't going to cost Ontarians any more money. One point one billion dollars: Don't worry about it," even though we already have the highest hydro rates in the country, which are negatively impacting the lives of Ontarians, families and the economy. He just dismissed it. It was really incredible.

This motion is obviously asking for some measurement of justice, because it's such a big number: \$1.1 billion. It's a little bit offside even to ask for the number because we know that it can't be done. But it does signal, I think, that people want to see Liberals pay. They will get their opportunity. There will be an election. I fundamentally disagree with Mr. Duncan that people don't care about the gas plants anymore. What they do understand and what you clearly do not understand is that people see the waste and they see the motivation that brought about this decision, which was purely partisan, which was purely politics.

My colleague mentioned the by-elections. I think that's a really good barometer of how people are feeling. When you go knocking door-to-door and you talk to real people—not just the pollsters—they say, "I don't agree with what the Liberals did and I'm not going to reward them." They will have an opportunity to cast their votes in the next general election, whenever that may be. The fact that you lost four of the Liberal seats: I think that's a little bit of justice, don't you think?

Interjection: It is.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think that's justice. The fact that we picked up three of your seats because we actually have a record to run on and we've brought in a level of accountability that, unfortunately, this motion does not bring—but we can run on that record and we can say to the people of this province that we are trying to be respectful of the money that comes into this place because we recognize that we have a fundamental responsibility to do that.

At the end of the day, I think the member who has brought forward this motion is sincere. She wants to send a message, because that's really all that will do. Clearly, you're not going to cough up \$1.1 billion. First of all, just the fact that you lost \$1.1 billion is an indicator that you don't understand the importance of that kind of money.

1530

At the end of the day, we need a stronger energy plan to support the economy, to support the province of Ontario. This motion, unfortunately, doesn't really have any traction to make that happen. The real work is happening each and every day in a minority government setting where accountability is truly happening for the first time in a long time at Queen's Park. We're proud of the work that we've been able to accomplish, and the Financial Accountability Office is a key piece of that work. Going forward, it's protecting the money that comes into this place, and protecting and working for the interests of the people of this province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I often say that I really like private members' time because it's an extraordinary opportunity for us to be non-partisan and to bring forward really important private members' bills. I also think it's very exciting when new members come in; they bring new ideas. And I'm always particularly impressed when we have so many bills. We had the MPP for Leeds-Grenville's bill the other day. The MPP for Parkdale-High Park made the comment, working with the MPP for Thornhill and the MPP for Eglinton-Lawrence, on very important things like remembering Yad Vashem and those kinds of moments.

I always find Thursday afternoon—which is why I always try to get this House duty. It's to really use this time not to do the kinds of things that we all do in politics—yes, my friend from Davenport just did a boxing move. I can't agree with him more. Sometimes a one-two punch is better than 1,000 words. It's where we actually get to be people.

I think one of the journeys I've always found here is I actually like most of the members of the opposition. As a matter of fact, I find that as Ontarians and as Canadians, we have so much that binds us together. These are those few hours every week where we actually get to be not just the MPP for Toronto Centre, but I get to be Glen Murray—or York-Simcoe, and my friend Julia Munro, who has a passion for poodles, and I have a passion for dogs. We get to know each other.

I've always said this place is so ridiculously partisan that it brings out the worst in us, and this is one of those motions that I personally find sad, because I think it's ridiculous.

But let me just go through a little bit of this. When I was mayor of Winnipeg, I watched as the Harris government here downloaded health and social services, as we were negotiating both with a Conservative and an NDP government consistently the uploading of health and social services from the city of Winnipeg to the province, and the competitive advantage that gave my city over Ontario counterparts.

I also watched as we were negotiating the integration of our hydro utility. Gary Doer, the then NDP Premier—we did a rather amazing deal on hydro consolidation, which I was very proud of. That left Manitoba with some of the lowest hydro rates. While that was going on, the privatization was going on in Ontario under Harris. Basically, what happened is the party opposite devalued public assets by \$8 billion. I'll tell you that as a Liberal, one of the things that has always been hardest for me, and where I often agree with the NDP, is that some of the privatization that has gone on is actually a consistent amount of the legacy that has caused us so much grief.

So it seems to me that if you actually remember that you were actually learning lessons, you wouldn't put forward a cheeky motion like that, because we all make mistakes. I can point to every party in power that lost at least \$1 billion through either a sincerely well-

intentioned innovation that just didn't work and fell flat on its face or, just, someone's politics got ahead of their common sense. People make mistakes. It's a big government, and that happens.

But, essentially, what you did is—it's as if you want to use the kind of language that you do, like "steal" and "robbery." You basically carelessly took \$8 billion and the value that people had—and you did that as a party in power. I don't usually do these things to shame you, but a little humility—for all the rhetoric that has come across. And the \$1 billion isn't going off into the ether; it is more expensive power.

I will tell you, I think it was regrettable. The Premier apologized; I apologized. It was a mistake of this government. But it's not like that money was stolen from someone. It is going to build two different power plants. It is relocating. Much of that is coming back in electricity. You're talking about the marginal costs over 20 years. Is it a real amount of money? Yes, it is. But has this disappeared? Is it actually a devalued asset? No, we're actually building two new power plants, and they will create jobs. They will create electricity. We took over a system that was so under-invested in—and the member from Burlington may not remember that the entire system was like that. We've had to rebuild 80% of the system.

The 407 highway: If you believe in this principle, you should be paying the government of Ontario \$700 million a year, which is what the actual cash on-the-book loss is for that terrible deal you did on the 407.

To me, this is the most inane debate. I actually have more respect for the member for Burlington than to remind her of the billions of billions of damage her government did because, quite frankly, a lot of things you did in government were very good. We've just led Ontario through the worst recession. You contributed to one of the most significant tech booms. We've built the best education system in the world. We should be more proud of what the New Democrats did in power, what Conservatives did in power, and race to the top and not the bottom, which I think is what this does.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: This motion brought forward by the member for Burlington expresses what the vast majority of Ontarians believe. I'm pleased to speak to what I believe is the core principle behind this motion. That principle is accountability. In ethics and governance, accountability is defined as answerability, blameworthiness, liability and the expectation of accounting. Speaker, those principles seem to be far removed from the current administration of this Liberal government.

Whether in personal business or the professional realm, there's an expectation that we will be accountable for our decisions and for our actions. Accountability is the acknowledgment and assumption of responsibility for those actions and decisions and to be willing to be called to account for them.

Unfortunately, as I hear the debate, the matriculation of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville made essentially a circus of this debate, as did the cackling that I've heard from members of the government benches with some hilarity around these numbers. Speaker, they may think that the people of Ontario have forgotten about this and that this is in the past. I want to say to them, be very careful, because they have affected every single person in the province of Ontario with their maladministration and their lack of accountability. They will be held accountable. It's not going to be up to the members here on these benches in the next election to hold them accountable. It will be up to the people who have been hurt, who have been damaged by the decisions of this government.

I want to read into the record some comments from my constituents. And I would that members of the government would listen, because this is not the member from Newmarket–Aurora; it's not Frank Klees saying this. These are just representative, and I know all of us have received similar emails and calls, and we have these discussions constantly when we're out in public.

Here's what Rob Lund wrote. "My impression is that the Liberal government thinks that by simply implementing preventive measures for future occurrences, it will satisfy the people of Ontario. Quite frankly, that type of action insults me. It is my money and money from my children and my unborn grandchildren that will be paying this soon-to-be named debt charge similar to the debt retirement charge paid every month to the hydro authority."

He goes on to say, "So why are the cabinet members that made these decisions still part of the government? It is obvious they are incompetent in these matters, so what confidence can the people of Ontario gain from government that they are working in the best interest of Ontario and Ontarians? Would you mind asking this question to the Premier during the next discussion over the power plant scandal?"

1540

Well, Speaker, I'm doing that in the course of this debate on behalf of Rob Lund and the many other constituents who have sent me similar emails and who have expressed their anger and their disappointment and their disgust with what happened.

This is from Mary Muscat: "When is someone going to be charged for this fiasco? And when will the individuals that misspent our tax dollars be held accountable and have to pay back what was stolen?"

And this: "It seems to me that as the decision to cancel the two gas plants was orchestrated by the Liberal Party of Ontario, should we not determine if a ratepayers group or some such body would be prepared to take on a lawsuit against the Liberal Party to recoup, partially at least, the cost of the politically motivated cancellations?"

The reason I read these emails into the record is because I want members of the Liberal administration here, of the Liberal Party and the Liberal caucus, to understand that this is not about spinning a message. This

is about a very serious issue that people saw, where more than \$1 billion was wasted that could have gone to health care, that could have gone to education, that could have gone to supporting children with autism and all of the many health care issues and social services that now there are long wait-lists for because of the maladministration, the waste and the politically motivated decision on the part of this government.

We've had many scandals in this province, but none as egregious as the ones that came to us thanks to the administration under one Premier Dalton McGuinty, and now his successor, Kathleen Wynne. The fact of the matter is that what is different from the gas plant scandal and what has motivated my colleague from Burlington to bring this motion forward, what is different about the gas plant scandal than any others, under any other administration—and yes, I will admit that administrations of all political stripes have made mistakes, without question. There has never in the history of this province been a decision that has been so brazenly politically motivated than the one made by this government, by this political party, the Liberal Party of Ontario, that was admitted to by two Premiers; that it was strictly a political decision.

It's only logical. That decision wasn't made by bureaucratic bundling. It wasn't made as a result of a technically driven policy development process. It wasn't made in response to a meaningful dialogue or conversation as the Premier would like to have, and has had many with the people of the province. It was made, by her own admission, as the result of a political decision to save the seats of some of her members. So they enjoy it, and one had the gall to stand in his place—the individual, the member from Mississauga–Streetsville, should have been embarrassed to even show up here. He should have stayed in his office and watched the debate on television rather than show his face, but he has the gall to stand up and give us the performance that he did today? Tongue in cheek? Rattle off numbers that are meaningless, absolutely meaningless. Insult added to insult.

I can tell you, Speaker, that the people of this province are observing; they're watching very carefully. There is no sense of accountability. This government has replaced the term and the principle of accountability with regret, with apology and with a desire to change the channel, that it'll never happen again. Well, it will happen over and over and over again, because it doesn't matter which file we open up. With every file we open up, we see the misadministration, the maladministration, the incompetence on the part of the people who are driving those decisions. Nothing will change in this province until those people who are responsible for those decisions are sent packing. That's what people in this province want. They want some consequences for that kind of decision-making.

As much as I hate to do this, Speaker, I couldn't help but listen to the member from Essex as he pounded himself on the chest and talked to us about how proud he is of his caucus. Proud of what, Speaker? Propping up this government so that they could go ahead and do what

they did to the people of Ontario? We wouldn't have this government today if that party, the NDP, hadn't propped them up in the last budget vote. They are the ones who are responsible for giving us this government, that irresponsibility.

I think it's time that the people of this province stood up and realized why, compliments of the NDP, we have Premier Kathleen Wynne and we have that cabinet and we have this kind of decision-making that is robbing people of essential funds to pay for health care, pay for social services. Why is it that we now are faced once again with a party here that could do nothing but cast aspersions on a well-intentioned bill that is before the Legislature today that does only one thing, and that is to express what voters in this province feel? I want to compliment my colleague from Burlington for bringing it to the floor of this Legislature.

Speaker, you know in your heart, as a member of the Liberal caucus, that what has been done by this government is wrong, should not be forgotten, and should not be forgiven. I don't believe it will be.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I want to thank my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora for a wonderful 12 minutes, and it was phenomenal. Thank you so much.

First of all, I want to stand up here today and say, first and foremost, you are always judged by your motive. The motive when we did the 407, since the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation said that—that was a government decision. There are hard decisions to make, but we had the Ontario taxpayers' best interests when we made that decision. The motive for the Liberals is a seat saver. It's not even in the same realm, so I don't even know why we're talking about—they're two totally different things.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Number two, when does it end? I mean, when does it end? The Ontario people have had enough.

We receive equalization payments. We spend \$9 billion more a year than we bring in; we spend \$1.4 million more now than we take in. We have had Ornge. We've had eHealth. We've now got Pan Am. At what point does someone actually stand up and make a stand and say, "Enough is enough"?

You're worried about going bankrupt as a party. Well, what did you worry about with the Ontario taxpayers when you were thinking about the \$950 million that you didn't care about that these people out here were going to have to incur?

So at what point does it stop? At what point do you want to make a decision to have a leader in Tim Hudak that is going to turn this province around and have it as a "have" province once again?

I'd like to also say that when we got into government—with the NDP, we had an \$11.3-billion deficit. Our motive was to restore fiscal responsibility, and we

did it. We said we were going to do five things, and we did them. We stand behind everything we do, and we turned it back around.

The comment across the way there was that when you got in, we had a massive debt. Well, you've doubled the debt. You've put us in a position that 600,000 people are unemployed. People don't even want to get out of bed. There are kids who are sitting on their parents' couches because we live in a place where we can't survive anymore. It's not sustainable.

The Ontario people want something done. We've made a decision to do it. We've put this motion forward, and it's the right thing to do: to pay it back. It was a seat saver. The motive is a motive, and we're always judged by our motive in the end. The motive for you was clearly to save five seats.

So we're standing here on this side with our leader, Tim Hudak, knowing that the best possible thing we can do is this—because you know what? If we don't do it, we've got Pan Am, and we're continuing the pattern over and over again. You've had 10 years, and look exactly where we are. We're in an absolute mess.

1550

So we need to change. We need to make things better, and this is a point right now to make things better. People are calling. People are asking. People are picking up the phone. They want it paid back.

So please do the responsible thing and do what you have to do. It was a betrayal of the ideas of our democracy and a grave insult to the people of Ontario. The Legislature is not for sale. It belongs to the people of this province. It is a sworn duty of the government of Ontario—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of private members' public business.

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ENREGISTREMENT DES LOBBYISTES

Ms. Forster moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998 / Projet de loi 115, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1998 sur l'enregistrement des lobbyistes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. The member for Welland.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you. Finally, after two years, I get a private member's bill slot—two years. So I'm pleased to rise to speak about my private member's bill. The bill proposes some reforms to the Lobbyists

Registration Act to ensure accountability and transparency of the lobbying process in Ontario.

The bill tightens up the timelines to actually register as a lobbyist. It closes the loopholes to ensure that anyone involved in lobbying is classified and registered. If you're lobbying, you should register. It's plain and simple. It also requires lobbyists to disclose their activities regularly and to report clients' political donations.

The bill will create a cooling-off period in which high-level public office-holders—MPPs and political staffers—cannot act as lobbyists for five years. It prohibits people from lobbying and earning public dollars on the same issue. It creates new whistle-blower protections and it increases fines for violations. It brings Ontario in line with many rules that govern Ottawa and it adds important new elements of transparency and accountability.

Lobbying can provide an important service for us as elected officials. It allows interest groups, whether they are businesses, citizens, workers or any other groups, to present their issues to the government and to opposition parties alike. While it's an important process, we must also ensure that it's accountable and transparent because the people we represent deserve to know who we're meeting with and why we're meeting with them. It's essential in maintaining that level of trust.

So I was glad to hear this week that the Liberals decided to announce their plans to have a more open government. Wow, what a shift from the last 10 years. While it's nice to hear such things coming from the government, it's hard to believe that this announcement is actually authentic. Coming from the Liberals, who have spent the last two years since I've been here covering up gas plant cancellation scandals, it certainly is difficult to believe that they plan to do anything besides the press conference when it comes to openness in this government.

When you look at the fact that they've told us over and over again in this Legislature that the cost of cancellation was 20 times lower than the actual cost, it's hard to believe that the Liberals, when it comes to their plans to open Ontario's government, are actually going to do it.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Opening it for some.

Ms. Cindy Forster: For some. However, if the Liberals were actually considering becoming open and transparent, my private member's bill is the perfect opportunity. I would think that supporting open lobbying in Ontario is a good first step for us to work together to do government differently, as the Premier says.

The bill would ensure that lobbying is open and transparent. We all know that one thing we desperately need right now is a higher level of accountability at Queen's Park. We know that that is what the Ontario NDP and our leader, Andrea Horwath, are working so hard to accomplish. That's why we pushed to institute the Financial Accountability Office, which has been talked about by a number of people today.

For the first time in Ontario's history, we have a separate body watching over the government to ensure that spending is in line and that scandals are avoided in

advance of them happening. Financial accountability and transparency in lobbying are very important steps in renewing public trust in government. When we talk about financial accountability, it's not hard to find examples as to why we need this: eHealth, Ornge, the gas plant scandals and the Pan Am Games, recently, are all situations that could have been avoided.

When we talk about lobbying and why we need a higher level of transparency, we need look no further than a couple of weeks ago in this Legislature when the Liberals across the floor and the PCs to my right brought forward a programming motion that included Bill 74, a bill handcrafted to serve one multi-billion dollar company, EllisDon. In an effort to get EllisDon out of agreements it had signed, the company hired well-connected and long-time Liberal insider John Duffy to lobby on their behalf.

Graham Murray, who we all know, editor and publisher of Inside Queen's Park, had this to say about the situation: "It was John Duffy of StrategyCorp, working as a government relations consultant to EllisDon, who devised a classic back-scratching scheme to get it through. The PCs would undertake sponsorship of Bill 74 to relieve the LIBs of the embarrassment of taking the lead on another contract-stripping measure, worse even than Bill 115"—the last Bill 115—"And enough of the LIBs would take part in the vote to ensure its passage."

This is a situation where well-connected lobbyists are calling the shots and drafting legislation to serve their interests and the interests of their clients, a situation where a high level of donating power has enabled one single company to gain bipartisan support for a bill that would trample collective agreements and exempt them from hiring unionized labour. The fact that the Liberals arranged a situation where they would not have to be seen as bringing forward a bill that legislated against collective agreements, in my opinion, is deplorable.

The Liberals promised after the last Bill 115 debacle that they would not legislate against collective bargaining. After they were unable to secure public support for their anti-teacher sentiment and lost a key by-election to my friend and colleague beside me, the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, they failed to win a majority government.

With Bill 115, and now Bill 74, they are once again meddling in the collective bargaining process and potentially setting precedents that would dismantle unionized labour in this province. Clearly, they did not learn from the turmoil created by the last Bill 115.

With the conspicuous nature of the creation of Bill 74, it appears that the government is fully cognizant of the contentious nature of the bill. When the programming motion was announced, both PCs and Liberals claimed it was necessary to move these non-contentious bills through the House, but in fact a contentious bill, Bill 74, was included, a bill that would trample collective agreement rights in order to directly benefit one of their highest donors.

The inclusion was a move that was called into question by the PC MPP from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and

Addington, in a private email to his fellow caucus members. He warned that the party was “walking on thin ice” and cautioned that, “In caucus, it was stated quite explicitly that, following a successful EllisDon fundraiser for Tim, our party would continue to benefit financially with the advancement of this legislation....

“I just don’t think it is in the best interests of my constituents.... Advancing legislation that explicitly abrogates a voluntary collective agreement at the behest of one employer provides our opposition with a proof-point to their allegations. Our opposition will cite this example at every opportunity to demonstrate that we are only fighting unions to make big business richer.”

EllisDon has also donated substantial amounts to the PCs: \$32,000 in 2012 and \$14,000 so far this year. When this member, so well-known for his anti-union mentality, cautioned his party against Bill 74 and was subsequently stripped of his labour critic responsibilities, it became clear that something dubious was under way.

Naturally, our leader asked the Premier about Bill 74 and the lobbying efforts of EllisDon. While initially dodging questions, the Premier admitted she had met with EllisDon, stating, “I don’t know exactly when the meetings took place. What I said yesterday was that we meet with a range of people from across all sectors, as, I assume, does the leader of the third party, so I cannot give the leader of the third party the time and date.”

1600

My bill would ensure that these dates and times are recorded. As everyone in this House knows, political donations are public domain. They’re available through Elections Ontario, but this bill would ensure those political donations were reported when lobbyists register. It would also add another level of transparency by creating a centralized recorded document of party donations.

When the Premier publicly defended Bill 74, she spoke about the bill as a necessary corrective action for EllisDon to level the playing field. What she failed to mention was that EllisDon has been very generous to them as well, to the Liberals: \$125,000 in 2012 and \$40,000 already in 2013. That information needs to be easily accessible and available to the public. When it comes to decisions being made at this level, that should set significant precedents. All necessary information should be readily available.

We saw similar situations in Ornge when former Liberal Party president Alfred Apps admitted he lobbied on behalf of Ornge without ever filing a public registration. The bill is clear: If you engage in lobbying, you need to register.

Just this morning, we learned about the government’s decision to scrap OPG-proposed nuclear plants in favour of refurbishing the reactors at Darlington and Kincardine after an exclusive \$100,000 Liberal fundraiser was hosted by Bruce Power.

There’s nothing wrong with fundraising, but many people will raise eyebrows when the government has a major fundraiser with specific interest groups and then, within a week, announces a major policy change. It’s

time to create a more open process. If the Liberal government wants to talk the talk, it’s time for them to actually walk the walk. It’s time to do the hard work that’s necessary to create an open, accountable government that the public can trust. A press conference is not going to affirm trust between public and government. It takes action.

New Democrats delivered a Financial Accountability Office and I hope New Democrats can actually deliver important measures to make lobbying more transparent here and accountable. The Liberals and the PCs have said they believe in transparency. The Liberals have just announced a plan to create an open government here in this province. If they’re serious, they will vote for this bill.

I look forward to receiving all-party support for my private member’s bill, the Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act, and I look forward to hearing from all of you during your debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, I want to commend the member for Welland. This is a very thoughtful piece of legislation and I think it results, as I said earlier, from newer members, who bring very clear eyes and more recent eyes and aren’t as caught up—I have to say to the member that I appreciate her efforts. I haven’t even been here for four years yet and it doesn’t take you long to feel like you’re part of the furniture sometimes, so I appreciate this. I know this was a lot of work and it’s very thoughtful. It’s a very thorough bill and I think it makes a very positive contribution to this Legislature and to the quality of governments and accountability and I want to thank her for it.

You know, as I said earlier, I often find this place too partisan and I share a lot of the critiques of traditional parliamentary government that she’s made. I know we often have to cast those aspersions on the party in power, I think, regardless of who has been in power, if we’re talking about this Legislature or others. It particularly concerns me because not-for-profit and civil society organizations can’t hire high-paid lobbyists; they can’t. I, as a minister, always have two lines that go into my office. Those folks who cannot afford to hire lobbyists get in quickly. I realize that in elected office all of us, as MPPs—and that’s what I like about this time on Thursday—really have to make sure that those who have deep pockets and money do that. I know we all have to raise money. The New Democrats have to raise money—they have expensive fundraisers—the Conservatives do and we do.

If you’ve ever run for leadership of your party, you take on a lot of personal liability and there are no tax receipts in this province. I know many people on both sides of the House have entered into leadership races and that for your family—and I can tell for my family around the kitchen table, it’s stressful. You’ll find yourself at \$50,000 or \$60,000—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I had no debt. I had a surplus.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friend from Timmins—James Bay is miraculous in some other ways, and he's proven it again today. Maybe he can take over my financial planning, because I'm on the freedom 155 program right now.

But this is very constructive. To do credit to the integrity act advanced by this government, the Lobbyists Registration Act right now—to be quite frank, we have some of the highest standards in the world here. As much as we like to attack, this is one of the most open and accountable democracies. My concern, Mr. Speaker: I served on the Public Service Commission review when I was in Ottawa. I was appointed as one of five outside members. This is one of the concerns that I have. It's often people on the right—and I won't say any party because I don't think it's attributable to the Conservatives.

When we were interviewing deputies—the commission was set up because of the loss of professionalism and creativity in the federal public service. It was 50% to 60% of a deputy minister's time, an assistant deputy minister's time or a professional staff was not doing the job that they were doing—solving poverty problems, cleaning up the environment—but reporting and accountability. I am always concerned, when we have a plethora of table officers and oversight, that what we do—and for those of us who consider ourselves on the progressive side of politics, what I call the cult of accountability is destroying the public service. I actually think it's undermining the professionals in public service, other than the fact that they've just laid off 700 scientists and things like that. If you talk to most professional staff in the federal public service, they spend more time reporting on the work they're doing, putting their muffin and their coffee that they bought on a website and filling out 15 forms every time they do work. I don't want to ever see us get into the mess that the federal government is in, where you're spending more tax dollars for people to report on work they're doing than actually doing public work in the public interest: dealing with poverty issues and environmental and economic issues.

Mr. Speaker, we also have—and I think this reinforces it and I particularly like some of the penalties in there because this is actually doing something that I think the MPP for Welland has thought out quite well, which is actually putting the onus on people who actually break the law, rather than burdening the public service with a whole bunch of more rules. FOI, all the stuff we go through, is extremely intense. As a matter of fact, recent rulings by the Speaker now—committees of this Legislature have more unrestricted access to documents than ever before. I will tell you now that I don't actually entertain a lot of material, and I tell people to do that. They don't send me commercial information because, I will tell you, one of the problems this government has, and governments that come after us will have, is that the idea of commercial intellectual property protection now is compromised.

I always say that when you're in government—and it says it on the wall—you should behave like you're in

opposition, and when you're in opposition, you should behave like you're in government because, one day in government, you will be in opposition, almost guaranteed, and one day when you're in opposition, you're going to have to live by the rules that you're imposing on government.

Again, this is an area where I give the MPP for Welland good marks because I don't think this is a gratuitous piece of legislation meant to try and embarrass a government. I think this is the kind of thing that anyone in government would comfortably live with and, if I was in opposition, I would comfortably live with. I think it shows a lot of maturity and gives me some hope.

This government has introduced, I think, more openness and accountability legislation than anyone in the history of the province. When I hear people saying that we're not open and accountable, I don't think that's a fair criticism because if you look at the openness and that—and so, where do we go next? Where I'm trying to go with my ministry, and I think this is important to elevating the discourse, is, we're trying to go to open data. For example, when we're planning a transit route, you'll see all the numbers for potential ridership. You'll see the history of investment; where jobs are being created and not; what the zoning is; what the ridership is; what the air quality is of different types of engine technology; what the capacity is; what the potential for value uplift is—all of that kind of data.

In Australia, they started doing this. One of the biggest things that brought down cycling fatalities is that cyclists now have developed apps because of all of the accident ratings, because I think we're actually moving—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Do they look at their apps when they're driving?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They don't look at them when they're driving.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay, good.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But we're actually in a world where I think—and this is again where I agree with my friend from Welland—people are not just voters or taxpayers. They don't just cast a vote and walk away from us thinking that somehow they're disinterested. I'll wrap up soon. But they are expecting to be more involved in the public process, Mr. Speaker, and the Internet and openness are important. I'm just going to conclude, if you can give me 10 or 15 more seconds.

1610

There have been some lessons in both this bill and the last bill. Do governments learn lessons? Are they doing things differently? The gas plants come up a lot. So have we learned any lessons? Well, you know, the next problem we had with unwanted infrastructure was the interprovincial tunnel, and we dealt with that in a very different way. We went out, talked to people, held meetings and cancelled it right away before there were any additional costs.

We had a problem with the construction standards on the Windsor-Essex Parkway—the Herb Gray Parkway. We did not wait. The moment I heard about it, I called an

inquiry, we brought in experts, we corrected it and we did our job. The best way—the member for Newmarket—Aurora said—to say you're sorry is to do it differently.

With every infrastructure challenge or problem or cost potential we've had—the city of Toronto with the Scarborough subway—we have said we are prepared to change, and we are prepared to act early before there are costs. I can go through probably about 20 projects since I've been infrastructure and transportation minister that were the exact opposite treatment of the gas plants.

So is this government behaving differently? Absolutely. Are we allowing projects to go on that should be cancelled? No. Nuclear plants: Should we have done it earlier? That can be argued, but this government, under Premier Wynne, acted to do that within months. I hope we get some credit for that.

But I take my hat off to the member for Welland. She's a proud member of this House, and I commend her and offer her my support for her piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm pleased to rise to discuss Bill 115. I'm not sure whether the member had the misfortune of having her bill titled Bill 115 or not, given that they opposed the previous Bill 115 in the last session of the Legislature. So I'm not sure she's going to win the lottery—if it's a stroke of good luck or bad luck.

Mr. Speaker, first of all I want to piggyback on what the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure stated. I have no issue, when laws have been broken, that appropriate recourse and punishment is levelled at those who break the law, and part of this piece of legislation, I think, addresses that in very good detail.

I will make a few comments with respect to some of the issues I have with this bill that I hope the member can consider. The first one is subsection 1(3), the definition of a "high level public office holder," who will, under this piece of legislation, if instituted, be faced with a five-year prohibition from lobbying, according to what the act prescribes. Now, "high level public office holder" means members of this Legislature. So every MPP, for five years after they leave this place, will no longer be able to lobby in particular circumstances. That's something that I think we have to consider. That is a pretty draconian thing.

We, as elected officials, are elected here at the behest of our constituents. Sometimes it works out for re-election and sometimes it doesn't. I think our ability to have gainful employment after we leave this place is severely curtailed with this piece of legislation. I know that members of the NDP often complain about the fact that we don't have a pension. Certainly, I want to know how they would respond to this piece of legislation.

More importantly, Mr. Speaker, I'm less concerned about myself than I am about my staff. According to subsection 1(3)—I sit as a member of the opposition in the third row of the Legislature, on the opposition benches. I'm not exactly sure I'm a high level public office-holder. But my executive assistant—of a member

in a third-row seat of his party in the Legislature—is considered a high level public office-holder under this bill. My executive assistant would also be prohibited for five years from taking and having any lobbying after we leave this place. I think that's simply an exaggeration.

Five years is a long time for someone who is doing this either for the love of their party or the love of their member, or maybe both, and who sometimes isn't being paid very well but is doing it because they love the public service they're affording. They're going to be curtailed in their future employment. Frankly, I wonder if that position is unconstitutional. I'd like to know that, because we're obviously dealing with a very important bill.

If you're receiving public funds—when we leave this place, we do receive public funds. There's a severance package. There's sometimes a pension that's associated with it. What does that have to do with our ability to have gainful employment in the future? I think these are, certainly, points that need to be considered in this.

I don't have very much more time to speak. There's also the provision of donations that lobbyists have to report, not just of themselves, but of their clients. Their clients make a donation without the lobbyist actually knowing; how is that going to play out in the long run?

I think the heart of this legislation is to provide increased accountability and transparency. The member, in her remarks, stated that she wanted to do that with respect to some of the events that happened in this Legislature. And my perspective is that if you're unhappy with what's happening with this government, the easy way to do it is to not prop them up, to call an election and let the people decide.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Dovercourt.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Now the riding of Davenport, but a great history of Dovercourt.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Sorry. Davenport.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 115, the Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act, introduced by my colleague Cindy Forster from Welland.

Speaker, for the record, we do not want to confuse Bill 115 with another Bill 115 that the government introduced in the House last year. While that infamous bill took historic measures to dismantle collective bargaining rights and undermine our democratic processes, we hope that the new Bill 115, introduced today, will increase accountability and strengthen democracy in Ontario.

This bill makes a number of changes to Ontario's Lobbyists Registration Act that will bring greater transparency to lobbying in the province of Ontario. Of course, the NDP understands that lobbying happens, that it's an important way for interest groups to have a say, whether they are citizens or businesses or workers or other groups. Unfortunately, every day, this government makes it clear that the status quo is unacceptable when it comes to lobbying, and we need greater transparency and accountability. Bill 115, the new Bill 115, provides mechanisms to achieve that.

This bill will require lobbyists to file monthly reports so that we can see who is lobbying who, and it will require them and their clients to disclose their donations. It will close loopholes so that anyone lobbying is classified and registered as a lobbyist in the lobbyist registry. This bill proposes many tools that already exist at the federal level, and it's simply time that the province update the rules here at Queen's Park.

I'm happy to support the Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act because it is so badly needed. We've seen a pattern of behaviour here at Queen's Park. Whether it's Ornge, the power plant fiasco or the bill to support construction giant EllisDon, we see well-connected insiders exerting unfair influence on important decisions and legislation here without any public knowledge. This not only creates biased decisions and policies; these loopholes erode the trust in our democracy and they alienate the people across this province.

Our province is facing huge challenges. We have hundreds of thousands of people without jobs and thousands and thousands more without good jobs. We have increasing living costs. We have a badly frayed social safety net, and we have tremendous environmental threats before us.

But instead of facing these challenges, people in Ontario see a government that doesn't listen to them, that instead privileges their own friends over the interests of the people of Ontario. That, Speaker, is disheartening to people across this province.

In 2011, when I ran to represent the people of Davenport, I saw voter alienation first-hand and up close. I met residents who felt that politicians at Queen's Park are out of touch. People are tired of politics as usual. They are tired of being shut out and tired of being ignored, and so they've given up and disconnected.

Since being elected, I, and many of my colleagues, have worked hard to re-engage people in the political process, to make Queen's Park more open, to make it more accountable, and to reconnect our communities and get people interested and involved once again in the political process. But the truth is that it's easy to understand people's cynicism about politics.

It's clear that we need legislative changes here at Queen's Park to clean things up and to ensure that the priorities of our Legislature reflect the real interests of the people of Ontario and not the interests of well-connected insiders alone.

That is why the NDP, under Andrea Horwath, have pushed for real accountability and transparency measures, whether it's our work to create a new Financial Accountability Office or this private members' bill today to bring greater transparency to lobbying in Ontario.

1620

Speaker, while it's almost cliché for most politicians to talk about transparency and accountability, I'm proud of the work that the NDP is doing here to roll up our sleeves to take action to deliver these results. I hope that other parties will join us and vote for this legislation. Let's close the loopholes in the Lobbyists Registration Act, let's increase transparency and accountability here at

Queen's Park, and let's restore a little bit of faith in our democratic process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm pleased to add my voice to the bill that has been presented by the member from Welland, and I have three minutes.

The bill calls for amendment to the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998. I have to compliment the member for bringing the bill forward for discussion in the House. There are several clauses that I think are worthwhile for consideration, but I do not intend to go one-by-one in three minutes. Since this is the bill for discussion today, I would like to see the bill proceed, move out of this House and given further consideration and brought back, hopefully with some improvements.

I was paying attention to the member from Cambridge when he mentioned a lot of the changes that he would like to see. We can only do that if the bill moves through this House on to committee and is brought back after a good conversation or consultation.

This may give the member from Welland, who introduced this particular private member's bill today, some comfort as to where the bill is going to go today: Let me say that in May 2013, our own Ontario budget contained a reference planning amendment to the Lobbyists Registration Act. Also, in July 2012, the Ministry of Government Services announced the intention to introduce a similar bill as the member did now. Further, if it's more comfort to the member, I have to say that the proposed Lobbyist and Expense Accountability and Transparency Act, 2012, was approved by the then cabinet but not introduced due to the following House prorogation.

So I'm delighted to see the bill here today. I hope that we can move it along. I think everyone in this House has been asking for more openness, transparency and accountability. I think the public would love to see it both ways, not only from members of the House and the parties of the House but as well from lobbyists, to know why they are lobbying, who they are seeing, when they are lobbying and for what—absolutely. I hope that the bill will move along.

I think there's a lot of work that can be done and should be done. The proposed legislation that we introduced was including leaders of the parties and ministers as well, so it's going to go a long way to bring some much-needed transparency to the House and how the House works, and to the lobbyists as well.

I compliment the member for bringing the bill forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to rise to speak on Bill 115, the Lobbyists Registration Amendment Act, the private member's bill put forward by the member for Welland.

While I agree with effective oversight of agents who lobby government officials on behalf of clients, I do not agree that this bill is the right way to tighten the rules. There is a benefit in today's discussion, though, which

serves to discuss some fundamental issues with the way this government has been doing business for so many years.

This bill may seem timely, particularly with today's front page news of the Premier being lobbied by an elite cabal of influencers about energy issues, but we must remember that lobbyists are necessary. Lobbyists are an integral part of the business of government, and lobbyists are the people who speak on behalf of the stakeholders we work with as part of government. I think even the NDP would agree with that, given that activists and union leaders are considered lobbyists, too.

Another aspect of government relations or lobbying we should all remember: We cannot legislate morality. An individual's ethical behaviour depends on the choices made by that individual, not necessarily the laws of the day. For instance, we could completely ban lobbying altogether so no one was allowed to speak to government if they had a pecuniary interest or pending approval. That would be drastic. But it would also be followed by some but not by all. The most egregious examples of government decision-makers being influenced by outside private interests would probably still occur, like the Alfred Apps and Don Guy case with respect to the Ornge air ambulance scandal. This must be considered. This bill seeks to protect against the most extreme cases of illegal influence but casts the whole lobbyist profession in the same light and restrains them by making the same impractical rules. All too often, this House is making laws to address specific situations, not widespread problems.

This bill proposes to make consultant lobbyists file activity reports within five days instead of the 10-day period in force now. This would be immaterial to us or the Integrity Commissioner, but this arbitrary change would be too onerous for the lobbyist who may have many files on the go.

The bill seeks to differentiate between a high-level public office-holder and a public office-holder. I think that this needs to be dealt with in this act. This bill seeks to implement a five-year cooling-off period for high-level public office-holders, which would prohibit them from lobbying after they leave their position. This change would severely limit the ability of a former office-holder to make a living, since their currency is their profile and contacts. Remember, it is not, and cannot be seen as, immoral to have connections in high places; it depends on how the person with those connections conducts themselves.

I find the most interesting part about this bill is the introduction of whistle-blower protection in the Lobbyists Registration Act. I believe whistle-blowers should be protected, but again, I'm not sure if this is the appropriate way to do it.

Let me conclude by saying that I believe this bill to be a good tool for discussion, to pave the way for improvements the member has described. I would like to go on to point out further issues I have with this bill, but I must yield my time to another colleague.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute delight to stand and to speak about the private member's bill from my friend from Welland. This is very, very much a timely bill, one can say, and it has been mentioned that it followed on the heels of an unfortunate fundraising experience, perhaps, from our friends in the Liberal Party. But certainly, all it does is what's already happening federally and in the city of Toronto. This is not rocket science; this is not anything new. I just wanted to counter some of the concerns that have come up.

The Minister of Transportation raised some concerns that this will add to the burden of those in political office and their staffers. No, it won't. It will add to the burden of lobbyists a little bit, yes.

But let me tell you about some wonderful lobbyists that I have. I want to stand up for lobbyists; we all do. There's nothing wrong with lobbying. My favourite lobbyists are not the EllisDons of the world, with \$3 billion in the bank. They're people like Susan Gapka, who came to talk to me about gender identity. They're people like the faith communities that come and talk to us about poverty. They're people like the whistle-blower at Marineland—who is now being sued—who talked to the Toronto Star and to us about the treatment of animals there. It's like the people who own dogs that look a certain way—mostly middle-aged women—who complain about how their dogs are being snatched from their backyards.

These are not people with money; these are people with passion. That's what good lobbyists are: people with passion who come and speak to us. Honestly, not one of them would mind putting their name down on a registration form; they would not.

Those with money who are hiring people to lobby for them, people like EllisDon, which, let's face it—you know, come on—was one of the more egregious occurrences in this place: the flip-flop on the part of the Premier; a bill rushed through Parliament for one company with resources. You know, it's time that they did step up and that they did register.

The Conservatives have talked about the five-year time limit on politicians and perhaps their high-level staffers becoming lobbyists. Again, this is the kind of issue that can be debated at committee. That's why we want to get the bill to committee. If there's an aspect of the bill that you'd like to improve, that you think should be changed, please bring it with your arguments. That's what committee time is for.

1630

Mr. Gilles Bisson: And bring your lobbyists.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, whatever. They can come and deputize before the committee about why they shouldn't have to register. Whatever. That could be done at committee.

Really, what the bill also speaks to is the sentiments of our constituents. Our constituents are frustrated. I've lost track of the people who I've talked to at the door in my riding who say, "What can we do about \$1.1 billion spent for political purposes? What recourse do we have? What

recourse do we have about Bill 74, passed just for one company? What recourse do we have?" This is a time-tested and true parliamentary procedure that can work, so let's let it.

Again, kudos. It's too bad it has taken two years to get your first second reading slot, my friend from Welland, but so be it. The wheels of democracy sometimes run slowly. We'd like to make them run a little bit more efficiently. That's what this bill is about.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: All too often when we come to this place, we look at the state of democracy in Ontario, and one of the things that troubles me, that gives me great anguish, is the fact that in Ontario, if we look at the voter turnout in the last election, we are bordering and often falling below 50%. That's only half, and sometimes less than half, of the people who can vote in this province who are actually engaging in the right to vote. That's deeply concerning.

The reason why that's happening is the ever-growing, ominous specter of cynicism. People feel cynical about politics, and it's because people no longer feel that they have a voice. People don't think that their one vote will actually mean anything or actually have any impact when they see big corporations that don't have the numbers in terms of the people but have deep pockets in wealth and are disproportionately able to impact the policies that govern our societies. That has turned people off from politics. That has made people feel like, "What's the point for me to even engage in the system when I have no voice? When another organization or company or corporation that is vastly wealthy has so much more of a voice and a say than I do, what's the point of even engaging?"

So it's incumbent upon us to do something to restore the public's trust and the public's belief in the fact that they can actually have a voice and have a say in our society. We need to do something about that, and one of the ways we can do that is to show some transparency. One of the greatest fears in human history is the fear of the unknown. If you don't know how something works or why something works, you're less likely—you'll be afraid of it, for certain, but you're less likely to be involved if you don't know how it works. If we can open up the doors, make politics more transparent and let people know how lobbyists work and how they can influence the decisions that politicians make, then perhaps people can then start to hold their governments more accountable. They can see the way the system works and they can be more involved in it and more engaged in it.

I think, among the many duties that we have as politicians, one of the most important duties we have is to reestablish that confidence in the political system so that people become more engaged in politics, so that people feel that they have a say in what goes on in the communities, and we can start that transition today by supporting my colleague's bill.

It's a simple concept, and much like my colleague from Parkdale-High Park indicated, it's something that's already going on. It's a system that we've already implemented and we've seen it work. By opening up the doors to how the system works, by creating more transparency in the system, we can encourage more engagement, we can encourage more political involvement and we can let people know that they do have a voice and their voice does matter. It's not a matter of whether you have deep pockets or not, but it's a matter of whether you have the passion and the belief of making your community a better place. That should determine how we run society and how society works.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity to talk a bit about this lobbyist legislation.

In 1999, Ontario became the first province in the Dominion of Canada to enact legislation to establish a registry. I recall it was something I had advocated for. At the time, the state of Florida had a registry, and I felt that anything would be better than nothing.

Since 1999, the office of our Integrity Commissioner has had the mandate of increasing transparency in this business. Essentially, the goal, as I see it, is to let people know they can go on a website and see who's working for who, who's lobbying who, who is being paid and what issues they are dealing with.

We do know that under the act, lobbyists are defined as consultant lobbyists paid to lobby on behalf of a client, lawyers, government relations consultants, accountants and other professionals. There are two other categories. In-house lobbyists, both—the first one, they're employed by persons, including corporations, and partnerships that carry on commercial activities; and the second category, employed by non-commercial organizations: advocacy groups and so many of the professional organizations, charitable organizations, industrial organizations. I understand that our Integrity Commissioner is advocating for those to be combined, if you will, the rules be combined—common rules for the in-house lobbyists.

We know lobbying is not new. It has certainly, I would expect, been around as long as government has been around. I suppose it has been around as long as lobbies in buildings have been around, and particularly buildings in the King's court or the Queen's court or military dictatorships. I really haven't had a chance to look into the history of this, but it has always been there. It's healthy, obviously, within a democracy.

This kind of open access—and I stress open access—is vital in the way that our system works. In my view, the decisions must be made out in the open, not in the back rooms, not behind closed doors.

Last year, during testimony regarding the very troubled Ornge air ambulance scandal, questions were raised about the role of lobbyists and how there may have been something playing out to limit access to the agency's financial records. I sat through testimony. I recall Jacob Blum alleging that Don Guy, Dalton McGuinty's former chief of staff, and other high-profile

Liberals had gone to the government to lobby on behalf of Ornge air ambulance. Mr. Guy denied conducting lobbying efforts on behalf of Ornge at the time.

We see a list of recommendations—these came out about a year and a half ago—from Ontario's Integrity Commissioner, who also serves as the lobbyist registry. Just in the final seconds, I just encourage people—a news release was put out about year and a half ago. Take a look at it. She indicates the system is evolving, and we have to make sure the legislation evolves to catch up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Welland, you have two minutes.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank everybody: the members of the government who commented on my private member's bill, the members of the official opposition. There seems to be some support for this bill across the floor and some support, as well, from the official opposition.

We get lobbied every day. We get lobbied in our offices. I have to tell you, when I first got elected and I was on the finance committee with the member from Beaches—East York in the first few months and we were there tied up for about five days and heard from about 80 deputants, we were being lobbied by every one of those people, and it was the best learning experience that a new MPP could possibly ever have. So lobbying is a good thing. We get to learn a lot of information about the people whom we represent in this province. But it also needs to be transparent, and it needs to be accountable.

I'm hoping there's enough support here today to get this bill through to the committee level. I heard some concerns about the period of time around the cooling off, and perhaps about a couple of other small issues. But at the end of the day, I hope that we get it to committee. I guess the proof will be in the pudding if gets to committee and then if it gets back to this House for third reading.

Thanks for listening. Thanks for the opportunity. I think it's a good bill, and it can only do good things for all of us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

COMPREHENSIVE PAY FAIRNESS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ SALARIALE GLOBALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 49, standing in the game of Mr. Barrett. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard yes and no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

POWER PLANTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. McKenna has moved private member's notice of motion number 46. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of business.

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ENREGISTREMENT DES LOBBYISTES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Forster has moved second reading of Bill 115, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll take the vote. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1643 to 1648.

POWER PLANTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Could all members take your seats?

Mrs. McKenna has moved private member's notice of motion number 46. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Fife, Catherine	Prue, Michael
Arnott, Ted	Forster, Cindy	Sattler, Peggy
Bailey, Robert	Jackson, Rod	Schein, Jonah
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Singh, Jagmeet
Bisson, Gilles	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Chudleigh, Ted	McKenna, Jane	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	Munro, Julia	Vanthof, John
Elliott, Christine	Natyshak, Taras	Wilson, Jim
Fedeli, Victor	Nicholls, Rick	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Del Duca, Steven	McNeely, Phil
Bradley, James J.	Dhillon, Vic	Milloy, John
Cansfield, Donna H.	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Chan, Michael	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Naqvi, Yasir
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Pinuzza, Teresa
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 27.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Open the doors and let the members in.

LOBBYISTS REGISTRATION AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ENREGISTREMENT DES LOBBYISTES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Forster has moved second reading of Bill 115, An Act to amend the Lobbyists Registration Act, 1998. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Armstrong, Teresa J.
Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Bisson, Gilles
Bradley, James J.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Dameria, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Dhillon, Vic
DiNovo, Cheri

Duguid, Brad
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Fife, Catherine
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy
Hunter, Mitzie
Jackson, Rod
Jaczek, Helena
Klees, Frank
Kwintar, Monte
Mangat, Amrit
Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McKenna, Jane
McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John

Moridi, Reza
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
Natyshak, Taras
Nicholls, Rick
Piruzza, Teresa
Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah
Sergio, Mario
Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Winthof, John
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 54; the nays are 0.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Forster?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Yes. I'd like to refer it to regs and private bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to regs and private bills. Agreed? Agreed.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 105. As many of you know, currently there is an exemption for paying the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 in an employer's payroll. The point of the issue, and the problem, is that at the moment, whether you are a small business or a big business, the first \$400,000 is exempted from paying the employer health tax. The problem with that is that it makes no distinction between those who earn \$2 million or \$3 million versus those who earn \$10 million or \$100 million or those who earn billions of dollars' worth of money and profits. For many, many years, the NDP pointed this out to the Liberals, and lo and behold, one of these fine years, the Liberals said, "That makes sense," and so they agreed with us. In so doing, they kept the exemption for the smaller companies, and they finally said to the bigger corporations—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We'll get there, Mikey.

And for the bigger corporations, they said—and we said—they'll do just fine. If they have in the millions of dollars of profits and in the billions of dollars, they'll be okay on their own.

I suspect some of the Tories disagree with that, because they think they all create jobs, whether they're small or they're big and that they should all get the same benefit. People like me don't agree with that. People like me think, "If you're really big, you don't need my help; you don't need that exemption." And when we give an exemption, we're talking about dollars that come from citizens. If it comes from citizens and we could save a few dollars on the basis that some of the rich men and women don't need our help, I think it's good.

So what we have accomplished here is to have persuaded the Liberals that they were wrong in giving a blanket exemption on all, whether they have one employee or 1,000, and move to a system where we would have had the possibility to save some money. Now, if we had kept it at \$400,000, we estimated that we would have had a saving of about \$90 million. In my view, that \$90 million would have been very, very useful, and we could have used those savings for something else. We could have used those savings to increase the support for seniors who are getting older and need our support.

I think of myself as I get older. I say, "Man, if my kids are not going to be there, who is going to be there for me?" And without that pension, Jimmy, you and I are in trouble. Without that pension, we're going to need help, and a whole lot of help. I don't want to become a senior citizen without the state being around with that power to say, "We're going to help you, Marchese, don't you worry." As we get older, I am worried that the obligations of the state are disappearing. I am worried that the power of the state to support the little guy is not going to be there, and so it's getting tougher and tougher.

With that \$90 million, we could have helped a whole lot of seniors who so desperately need our help, but the government decided that they would up the exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000. My personal view is, I don't know that they need that extra support personally, but we have a bill before us that goes a long way to doing what we had, by and large, recommended, so I am going to support it. But I think you, the government, made a mistake on that one; I really do. You have a huge deficit that ranges in that area of \$12 billion—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh, it slipped down a little bit. It used to be \$20 billion. Member from Eglinton—Lawrence, do you recall the days—well, you weren't here just then, but at the time that we were in power, our deficit hovered around \$11 billion, and I remember the Minister of the Environment and all his colleagues, Liberals then, and all the Tories railing against that deficit, and yours had reached to the tune of—

Mr. Mike Colle: I think it was about \$20 billion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was \$20 billion, and nobody worried about it. Nobody said boo. The Liberals said, "No. It's just the way it is. It's the economy. What can you do?"

Interjection.

1700

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You didn't say that when we had the recession in 1990.

Money you could have used—I know it's \$90 million, but you could have used it in so many different ways. You decided that you would up the exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000 and, as a result, lose those possible savings. I think it's a mistake.

I also believe there's something else you should be looking at. Starting in 2015, you, the government, will start offering input tax credits that will refund the HST paid by the corporations on things like meals, entertainment and company cars. In addition to the perks, it also will refund the HST paid on office utility bills like heating and lighting. I think that's a huge mistake. We call it a tax loophole, and you call it whatever you want, but in 2015, once you give a break to many of the corporations, you will be losing, in the space of three to four years, close to \$1.3 billion.

I know your Minister of Finance has sent a letter to the federal Minister of Finance as a way of indicating that perhaps you want a change, but I don't see any heart in that; I don't see the passion. I don't see Liberals publicly saying, "That's what we're going to do." I don't see the Minister of Finance saying, "That's what we're going to do." I get the impression that the Minister of Finance sent that letter because New Democrats were hammering away at him and the Liberal caucus, and so, to pretend that he's doing something about this problem, he sends a letter to the federal government as a way of saying, "We're doing something."

My view is, you're doing nothing. I don't hear you; I don't see you. Other than that letter, you have done absolutely nothing to indicate that there's no way you

would allow the loss of \$1.3 billion that we desperately need and give it away to people who actually don't need it.

Imagine that you will refund the HST paid on office utility bills. I understand that the HST paid on energy costs by manufacturers and factories is already refunded, but that's a good thing. Giving them a refund, because they are in a field where they're actually creating work, makes sense. In the manufacturing area, it makes sense. But to allow that, to refund the HST paid on office utility bills, makes no sense. People who earn \$20,000, \$30,000, \$40,000 are not going to get a break on their hydro bills, but you're going to give a break to financial institutions that don't need it. This is a problem for us and many New Democrats.

By the way, speaking of the HST, do you remember, Liberal friends, when New Democrats attacked you for doing that? Do you remember, Liberal friends, that you quoted numbers by Mr. Mintz, the economist who said that if you—

Mr. Mike Colle: Jack.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You remember that? Jack: You know him very well; he's your friend. Do you remember him saying that if we do this, it will create 600,000 jobs, give or take? Do you remember that? Since our economist Mr. Mintz said that we were going to create 600,000 jobs, not one Liberal has said, "We have those jobs. They have been created."

I tell you this: If Mintz was right, we'd have very low unemployment in Ontario today. Where are the Liberals saying, "We have created 600,000 jobs because of the HST?" You said and Mintz said we were going to create 600,000 jobs by the introduction of this HST tax. You said that; he said that.

Why don't we haul him back? Why don't you haul him back, saying, "Mintz, you were wrong. Where are those jobs?" You should haul him back. You should bring him back here and say, "Where are the jobs?" You should commission him back to say, "Study it and tell us where the jobs have been as a result of introducing this HST."

I get a little enraged by it all, because not one Liberal has ever said, "By the way, those 600,000 jobs are here, because Mintz was right in his assessment of it. He predicted it. We have the jobs." No, Liberals never talk about those jobs. Where have they gone? Where?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: We've had many, many hours of debate on this particular bill. I appreciate the member opposite's passion. I think it's really important, for the sake of making sure that Ontario's economy continues to move forward, that we wrap up debate on this bill and that we get this bill to committee for consideration, so that we can actually work together to support small business in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to add my voice to the debate. I think

my colleague from Trinity–Spadina spoke very eloquently, which is no surprise; he often does.

One of the issues, though, that I think needs to be touched on—and I hope to have an opportunity to expand on this issue when I get a chance—is that small businesses are vastly different from multinational corporations, and the way we treat them should be different as well. We know that small businesses are a major driver in terms of jobs and employment. We know that. But the way they are treated is not conducive to encouraging their growth. We need to make sure we have a policy in place that acknowledges their unique position, that they have a great potential for growth but they face a lot of obstacles and barriers.

We can encourage their growth and their successfulness by ensuring that we create the climate that fosters small businesses, and we need to do that, because there is a great opportunity there to grow that burgeoning area, but we're not taking advantage of that because we don't have the policies in place that protect them.

I think there are a number of great ideas that exist right now. Particularly, our friends from Manitoba, the NDP there, have enjoyed a significant period of time in office. They have implemented a unique taxation principle which treats small businesses much differently than larger corporations. They put a cap on the taxation of companies that make less than \$500,000 net. They pay no corporate tax provincially. That's an interesting strategy to encourage small businesses and it's something we should look at as to what we can do to differentiate the two and foster the growth of small businesses.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just wanted to reflect on the member from Trinity–Spadina. The interesting question, though, is, where is Jack Mintz when we need him? I would like to have Jack come back and explain the effects of the HST. That would be interesting. I agree with him on that.

But the other problem is this: Multinationals, as you know, Mr. Speaker, have no loyalty to place. So if there aren't conditions that they feel are conducive to being based in Ontario—and we have the good fortune of having a lot of these large companies based here. That's the reality: They're based here in Toronto. We're fighting with the low tax regimes in Alberta. Then we see that Manitoba, I guess, is racing to the bottom too to cut taxes for everybody. But in five minutes, these companies would leave Toronto and be in Calgary overnight. That is one of the realistic problems we face in this province, that these multinationals have no loyalty to place anywhere.

Now, the other thing I'd like to mention is that Ontario, despite the near collapse in 2008 which occurred with the gamblers on Wall Street and the credit default swaps and all that nonsense, the derivatives—which still go on—we've been able to bring back many jobs: not enough jobs, but we were able to somehow keep our head above water and reduce the deficit. And remember why

we went into deficit: to keep nurses working, to keep teachers working, to keep auto workers working. The price of that was the deficit. So if there was no deficit at the time when the NDP were in power, you can imagine how bad the recession would have been at that time in 1990. You can imagine how bad it would have been in 2008 if we hadn't kept people working. So that's the other side of reality.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm surprised to learn from my friend from Eglinton that, in fact, even Manitoba is racing to the bottom with their corporate taxes now. I wasn't aware that that had happened.

We recognize that when political parties assume the mantle of office, what happens is that often what they have said in opposition is not translated to what they do in government. This happens with all political parties. I'm being non-partisan today.

1710

But I always enjoy the contribution of the member for Trinity–Spadina. He sprinkles his words with some wonderful humour. He takes the issues very seriously and not himself, as we always like to see in a member. I think he probably agrees with the member for Eglinton that, indeed, these companies that are multinational have no loyalty to a particular place.

We're confronted in the world with the reality, as he has described that reality, of others dropping their taxes, providing all kinds of incentives, and then you'll see industries or businesses moving to that jurisdiction. Now, they're not there permanently. They're usually there until the incentives disappear or the taxes go back up or something. There's not that long-term loyalty that's needed at all.

But I think this particular piece of legislation is certainly worthy of support. I'd be very surprised if members of the New Democratic Party wouldn't support it; in fact, I think they probably will. They're sensible on issues of this kind. They were sensible enough last time to vote for the budget, which I think encompassed a lot of what everybody in this House had discussed, and I'll be looking forward to that same support in the spring of next year from my friend from Trinity–Spadina.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Trinity–Spadina, you've got two minutes.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you for the contribution that you have all made.

New Democrats will support this bill. We have said that. We, in effect, have pushed you to do this. Those were the remarks that I made in my introduction. We said that big corporations should not have this benefit. We told you that for years, and you finally introduced a bill that does it. All you've done is to increase the exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000, and I was arguing with you that that was a mistake because you could have had \$90 million in savings that could have been used for other things. That's the argument I was making.

But the other argument I engaged in at the very end had to do with the HST, which I thought you might comment on. I know you very well, Minister of the Environment, and I thought you would be keenly interested in that kind of issue. I know the member from Eglinton—Lawrence is as well.

But you do recall the argument that Mr. Mintz made, that if you combine the PST, the provincial sales tax, with the goods and services tax, the federal tax, which used to be—and that tax existed for different items, and then you harmonize them. The economist Mintz argued with you that if you do this, you're going to create 600,000 or 650,000 jobs, and you all bought into that. You all bought into that. Every speaker, including most ministers, said, "This will create 650,000 jobs. We've gotta do it." As soon as you passed it, not one of you talked about those jobs. Where are those jobs? So I expect you every now and then to talk about that, and I want one of you to say, "Bring back Mintz. We paid him good money for that report."

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That was good. We want the rest of you to say, "Bring him back. We want him to do a report on all those jobs. Where are those jobs?" That's what I want Liberals to say—"Where are those jobs?"

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this legislation, and I've wanted to speak to it for quite a while now. I'm disappointed when some are calling for an end to debate, that enough has been said and not wanting people like myself to stand up and talk about this.

Anyway, Bill 105 does, in my view, provide a bit of a window on what's exactly wrong with this present government and their approach to governing or, should I say, lack of approach. I will say that the opposition has presented a number of plans over the last—well over a year now—plans to help out business and small business in particular; obviously, jobs plans; plans for the economy; proposals with respect to taxation, whether it be income tax or consumption taxes like the HST or business taxes; labour policy—that was some of our first presentations or recommendations with respect to bringing some of the labour policy out of the 1940s; energy policy, of course; and the importance of addressing the plethora of rules, regulations, red tape and forms to fill out and boxes to check off. There's too much of that. It suffocates business. When I talk to people running small businesses, certainly when I talk to farmers—and this goes back many, many years—they indicate to me that it just takes the fun out of doing business. It takes the fun out of farming when they're so involved, and their husband or wife is involved, going through the paperwork.

One problem I feel with Bill 105 is that the members opposite really seem to be unwilling to go far enough. They're unwilling to take any really decisive action with respect to tax relief, not only for Ontario businesses but for their customers, their communities. What I see here is

a bit of tinkering; it's not going to go far enough to solve what I consider an economic crisis, a jobs crisis, and the attendant deficit and debt crisis that I see looming.

This legislation obviously comes at a time when we're struggling with skyrocketing electricity rates. I personally heat with electricity. I found that I also have to put an awful lot of firewood throughout my home to keep it warm because I personally cannot afford the price of electricity—no other fuel source, practically, is available out in much of rural Ontario. We don't get natural gas lines running up to our houses.

Businesses are concerned and farmers are concerned about possible increases to premiums for WSIB. Many people are concerned about the College of Trades tax. I'm about due for a haircut, and I'm going to be hearing about that. This is something that is talked about in hair salons and barbershops.

I mentioned labour legislation going back to the 1940s. Some of our outdated apprenticeship ratios can obviously be adjusted; and, of course, the red tape, rules and regulations that strangle the ability of small business to prosper, in many cases, let alone survive. So we do need a real plan—multiple plans, essentially—to free up business from so much of the tax and the regulatory burden that government has placed upon them so they can continue to invest and to create the jobs that we all need, the jobs that this province deserves.

Our province, traditionally, as we all know, has been the economic leader of Canada in the past. Men and women built the province through hard work and entrepreneurial spirit, and decades of government that operated and spent money—raised money but also spent money—within its means.

Over the past few years, this government has allowed Ontario, essentially, to lose its way, and we're facing, I feel, some very critical choices going into the future. Our economy is limping along, and I see a government that's racing ahead. It really is time that we either implement sensible policies that create jobs or be forced to accept a future of high debt, declining public services, cuts to government programs and layoffs. I really see no policies here that would help us head off some of these issues in the future. Why are we living so well below our economic potential?

I suggest that members opposite should be looking at some of our documents. There's a series of documents, one titled *An Agenda for Growth*—again, a smaller, more focused government, proposals to grow the economy and create jobs. We do listen to small business. We listen to individuals, economists—I heard Jack Mintz's name mentioned—think tanks, the industry associations, and we do our best to absorb the ideas coming forward. Specifically, balancing the books quicker than the current plan: That's going to take something like another five years, if it happens at all, and again, continue to add billions of dollars to our debt.

1720

Creating a level playing field for all to succeed through lower taxes, freer trade, fairer trade, ending

corporate welfare, reducing the regulatory burden—we sent a benchmark, a target on this one; cut the red tape by at least 33% over three years—strengthening the skilled trades sector to create 200,000 new jobs, and breaking traffic gridlock in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

Speaker, we've got well over 600,000 people unemployed in the province of Ontario. Many, many others have given up looking for work, and many, many others are on the Ontario Works program. It's going to take a major transformative change—it's going to take some bold action—to put people back to work.

I see a miserable failure on the part of this government in this regard. As a result, those who are paying taxes are also paying for soaring power rates, a costly, time-consuming regulatory burden, and overspending in a government that's careening toward—and many of us know this number now—a \$30.2-billion deficit in the fiscal year 2017-18, added to a projected \$411.4-billion debt, again, coming from the work done by Don Drummond, commissioned by this government.

It doesn't end here. More troubling trends over the past decade: Ontario has experienced a net loss of leading global companies. I think of one, GM diesel, in London, Ontario, that is set up in Muncie, Indiana.

Despite prolonged unemployment, the province faces unprecedented skilled labour shortages and ineffective economic development programs that continue. You really don't see any concrete evidence of them producing results—we've got to take a look at that program as well.

The Premier, and the one before her, are oblivious to the fact that their very own policies have thrown up barriers on what should be a clear path toward economic recovery, toward job creation and prosperity, specifically within our small business sector.

A few weeks ago, I caught a flight back from Saskatchewan. A bunch of young guys were in the back. A fellow yelled out my name, a chap from Delhi. The person I sat next to was from Caledonia. The person sitting in front of me—another young guy—was from Windham Centre. Local residents—I knew many of the families. In fact, when I flew out to Saskatchewan, the van that picked my wife and me up went to a neighbouring town, Delhi, and picked up a fellow there. He was working in Alberta.

People in my riding are working, Speaker. Unfortunately, the people in the Delhi-Windham Centre area are working on the railroad outside of Saskatoon because Dalton McGuinty destroyed our tobacco economy. They would be farming right now. They're working on the railroad out in Saskatchewan.

The fellow sitting next to me was from Caledonia. Dalton McGuinty destroyed our home-building economy in Haldimand county. That's why that young Caledonia fellow is working out in Saskatchewan.

These guys want to work. They're working nine to five: nine days in Saskatchewan, five days home. That's become the nature of the world of work in my riding, Speaker—young people, bright ideas, some of them have young families.

I know that when we picked up the one fellow—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Questions and comments? The member for Mississauga-Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Mississauga East.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mississauga East—Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: All I wanted to say was that I've heard the opposition talk about how we need to create a climate for small business to thrive. Well, let's get on with it. Let's send this bill to committee, end the debate and do some work on it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The member for Haldimand-Norfolk gave an outstanding speech this afternoon, and I want to compliment him for it. He is a principled Conservative voice in this Legislature, and he does an outstanding job representing his constituents. I particularly appreciated the points he made with respect to red tape and how red tape is strangling our small business people, in many cases, and our farms. He mentioned that hydro rates are continuing to go up, up, up, and it is hurting our small business sector as well as the economy generally. It's certainly particularly affecting our manufacturing industries.

He mentioned the Ontario College of Trades, which of course is an issue that our caucus has raised many, many times, and how that is having a negative impact on the economy.

He also talked about the outdated labour legislation and the ratios for apprenticeship that need to be revised. Again, that's something that our caucus has talked about in many cases.

I certainly want to again commend the member for Haldimand-Norfolk for the private member's bill that he brought forward this afternoon, Bill 113, which was unfortunately defeated by the Liberal government. He was making an important point, that we need to take a hard look at the growing disparity between the pay and benefits of the public sector jobs in our province in comparison to the private sector ones. I think it was an important point that he made, and it's unfortunate that the Liberal government defeated the bill at second reading and were unwilling even to give it consideration such that it might have gone to committee for further discussion.

The member talked about the entrepreneurial spirit that has built this province. At the end of his remarks, he talked about his constituents who in many cases are having to leave this province to go to Saskatchewan for employment, and the concern that he has about that.

Again, these are important points that need to be brought forward in any discussion about the economy of the province of Ontario. The government would have us believe that Bill 105 is going to make a significant improvement. I certainly hope to have a chance to participate in the debate later on too, as this bill continues to be debated at second reading.

I want to again congratulate the member for Haldimand–Norfolk for his comments this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure always to rise in this House, and to speak about the comments of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk.

Just further to what the member from Wellington–Halton Hills had to say, if you really want to be a small business and engage in anything entrepreneurial, the place to be is Manitoba, which has the lowest small business tax rate in Canada under a New Democratic Party government. They dropped it from 8% to 0%, because we know, and we're the only party that seems to know, that small business provides 85% of all new employment.

So when the Liberals talk about the HST creating 600,000 jobs—and again, the member from Trinity–Spadina dealt with that—really, where new jobs come from for the vast majority of people is through entrepreneurs and through small business. And I can tell you that for small business, represented primarily in the 416 area by TABIA—30,000 small businesses are represented by TABIA—their major issues are, “Get MPAC off our backs,” because the MPAC agency is completely dysfunctional and now people are paying more on their MPAC assessments than on their rent in small business—get that done; “Look after the business educational tax,” which we have been calling for for a long time; and, “Give us some incentive to hire new people,” which we have also called for and which we did an extremely good job about, by the way, when we were government.

If you want small business to thrive, the simple message is to look at history, look at what is happening in Canada right now, and by all means vote New Democratic Party, because we're the only party that stands up for small business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 105, and I heard the member from Parkdale–High Park advocating for small businesses. I think everybody in this House does support the small businesses, so let's get this bill to committee for real debate, strengthen the bill through the committee's work, and come back to the House in support of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk, you have two minutes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thank you, Speaker, and I just want to reiterate that I really appreciated that 10 minutes. That was valuable for me, and I feel it was a valuable 10 minutes for the 110,000 people that I represent. I really appreciate the feedback from the two members, from both the opposition and the third party.

I just find it disappointing. There are not very many of us in the province of Ontario that have an opportunity to walk in this door and speak on behalf of our constituents. I think it's somewhat frivolous, when you have the privilege of speaking even for two minutes, to only speak

for maybe, I don't know, 15 or 20 seconds. I just find that passing strange. This institution is so important. We have all agreed to a certain number of hours of debate on this issue.

1730

I had to talk about Saskatchewan, on a more positive side—and we heard a bit of this about Manitoba and their taxation policy. Things are going well in parts of Manitoba. Things are going very well in the province of Saskatchewan. They have had, as we know, very tough times. It seemed, for decades, that so many farmers returned back to our area because they couldn't make it in Saskatchewan. That has turned around. Their wheat harvest has doubled. In Alberta, things are cooking. It's just great what's going on in Alberta.

My wife and I spent some time in North Dakota, up at Williston, in the heart of the shale oil sector. Everybody's working. They're flocking in from all over the United States. Young guys are covered in grease and oil and dirt. They've got a big smile on their face. They're working day and night. Some of them are living in tents. That's a modicum of what we have to bring back to the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jonah Schein: Speaker, I'm happy to speak today on behalf of my community in Davenport and to join the debate on Bill 105, which is the Supporting Small Businesses Act.

This week is Canadian Small Business Week, and it's a great opportunity to talk about small businesses and the good that they do for our communities. Small and medium-sized businesses are at the very heart of the Canadian economy. In fact, they represent 99.8% of all Canadian companies and employ nearly two thirds of private sector workers in Canada.

In my community of Davenport, it is small and medium-sized businesses that make our communities more prosperous and our neighbourhoods more vibrant. In Dovercourt Village, in Bloordale Village, in Little Portugal, in Dundas West, in West Queen West, in Fairbank Village, in St. Clair Gardens, in Corso Italia and in Regal Heights Village, it is our small businesses and our local BIAs that work hard to beautify our street-scapes, to organize our street fairs and events and to enrich our communities.

This past summer, on June 8, it was the Little Portugal and Dundas West BIAs that came together to host the inaugural Dundas West Fest.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It was good?

Mr. Jonah Schein: It was great. There were over 30,000 people in attendance. It was an amazing success. There were businesses and community organizations and families coming together to make the festival one of the best in the city, and in only its first year.

Speaker, people in our Davenport community rise to the challenge, and they appreciate the opportunities to showcase what they have to the rest of this city. The first

year, this summer, was a great success. I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish next year.

Just a few weeks ago, we celebrated with the Regal Heights BIA to commemorate the rich history of our St. Clair community, on St. Clair Avenue West, with the 100th anniversary of the St. Clair streetcar. It was great to see newer shops like the Rainbow Caterpillar, which recently opened Toronto's only multicultural children's bookstore, hosting a storytelling workshop on the street while young artists from the well-established Ontario School of Ballet danced nearby.

Speaker, my office is so happy to be on St. Clair West and to have neighbours like Connie, who have welcomed us into the neighbourhood; folks like Connie—who has run her shop for decades on St. Clair—who continue to work hard to give back to our community and to organize through our local BIA, whose annual CornFest on St. Clair is a great way to bring friends and neighbours together in our local park each year.

I want to thank all of these folks who continue to make contributions to our riding.

The bill up for debate today is Bill 105, and it is a bill that I will support. But unfortunately, it is a bill that will do little to help the BIAs in my riding or business owners like Connie who are looking for some relief and support in this province.

With its grandiose name, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, I would have hoped that this bill would have done more.

However, Bill 105 does address an issue that the NDP has raised. We raised it in last spring's budget discussions, and it's one that I'm happy to discuss today. As many of the people in this House know, the NDP worked hard, in last spring's budget, to deliver greater fairness in Ontario when it comes to balancing our books and paying for our public services. The NDP identified corporate tax loopholes that could be closed to help bring fairness and balance to our province. One of these loopholes is the exemption that is given to big companies like the Royal Bank. It gives the same exemption to them as it does to small businesses on their employer health tax; it gives them the same exemption on the first \$400,000. The NDP has long argued that the exemption is not appropriate to put for these larger companies. There is no reason, in fact, to exempt large companies from paying this tax. This was one of our budget demands, and it was to ensure that companies with more than \$5 million in payroll would no longer be eligible for the exemption. So I'm happy to see that this was included in the legislation that's before us today.

Speaker, the government has also moved to close loopholes that allowed employers to segment their workforce to show smaller payrolls. This will be important so that exemptions are not given out unnecessarily.

In Bill 105, the government has also increased the exemption amount to \$450,000 for the 2014 through 2018 calendar years for companies with less than \$5 million in payroll. By increasing the amount of this exemption from \$400,000 to \$450,000, the new threshold

ensures that there is no new revenue for the province. And starting in 2019, the exemption amount is adjusted for inflation every five years. This will further ensure that there is no new revenue that will be gained from removing this exemption for large employers.

While I still support the measure before us today because it does shift the burden off of small businesses and onto the biggest corporations, it's unfortunate that this government continues to deprive our province of the financial resources we so badly need to fund our public services, like our public transit.

Speaker, it's unfortunate that the Liberal government has committed to a series of new corporate tax loopholes and giveaways to Ontario's largest corporations and highest-income earners that will cost Ontario's treasury over \$35 billion by the year 2031.

Beginning in 2015, the government will open a \$1-billion corporate tax loophole that will give Ontario's largest corporations an HST rebate on expenses like high-priced restaurants and box seats. The annual cost of this loophole is \$1.3 billion—\$1.3 billion. What would this mean for the people of Ontario if we collected this revenue and actually invested it in our province? With \$1.3 billion, we could provide over 2,100 new buses for municipalities across Ontario. With \$1.3 billion, we could build over 10,000 units of affordable housing. Imagine the dent we could make in our provincial waiting lists for affordable housing with just one year of revenue from this loophole. It's a shame to see that this government will pass over this opportunity to address the housing crisis in Ontario.

This isn't the only loophole the government will create. Beginning in 2018, the government plans to cut corporate tax rates from 11.5% to 10%. This will cost the treasury an additional \$800 million a year. Also in 2018, the government will cut taxes only for individuals earning over \$500,000 a year. That will cost the treasury \$470 million a year. What is the total cost of these new loopholes? It's \$2.57 billion a year. That's \$35 billion by 2031.

Speaker, you can understand why, given these huge giveaways planned by the Liberal government, we can't help but feel that Bill 105 is a small measure that does not go far enough. This government should instead be reconsidering these giveaways. The government should make the delay in the HST exemption and input tax credits permanent.

If a corporation wants to take their clients out to a restaurant or get them box seats to a Leafs game, that's fine, but they shouldn't get a break for it, and they shouldn't get a break at the expense of the people of this province.

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The provincial government should also find ways to increase corporate tax compliance, of course. It should reduce the ability of corporations to eliminate or decrease payment of provincial corporate income tax by shifting profits and losses across Canada.

As I said before, I support Bill 105 and I would like that we send it to committee. It brings forward good ideas

that the NDP has introduced. But overall, I must say that the government should look at its priorities. The government should consider further initiatives that the NDP puts forward.

We should stop asking the people of this province to pick up the tab while the ones who have the most go for a free ride.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I just want to reiterate what I said in the last round of debate. It is fantastic to be here and to have the opportunity to hear the passion and the ideas that are flowing from other members of the House on this particular bill. But we are now even further along in how many hours of debate we've had than the last time I said this.

I call on all members of this House to work with us so that together we can actually provide support for Ontario's small businesses. Let's get this bill to committee and let's move forward here, building one Ontario. Let's move it forward together.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm very pleased to rise and discuss the comments made by the member from Davenport. I think that he makes some very valid points, particularly with reference to some of the issues that he is concerned about in his riding, and particularly BIAs, the business improvement areas, that dot his riding and, in fact, ridings right across the province of Ontario.

We look at the comments that he has made. He's putting them in the context of what this bill's title suggests, which is—I can't remember what the name is; I actually have the wrong bill—the Supporting Small Businesses Act, which is Bill 105.

I want to say that what's important here, it being Small Business Month and Small Business Week in the province of Ontario, is that there are a lot of issues that are pertinent to how we can help small businesses. We have to have the ability to discuss those issues.

I know the member for Vaughan is very anxious to get on with the vote and perhaps to get out of this place a little early today. But I think it's our responsibility to thoroughly debate these issues, to raise the concerns that our constituents are bringing to us, or small business owners in our ridings are bringing to us, because, as the member from Davenport says—and he says it correctly—small businesses are the engine of our economy in many ways, where two thirds of our private sector jobs are associated with small businesses. Supporting small businesses, I think, is what all members of this Legislature wish to do.

I would never shrug in the face of criticism, that we should somehow get on with the debate when these are very important matters and this is what people elected us to do.

I look forward to participating in this debate further.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My colleague from Davenport spoke very passionately and very well. I want to commend him on a couple of points he raised.

First off, he gave us a little map of all the BIAs in his riding. I was actually very interested, because I think you have a wonderful riding, and I didn't know that there are that many. I knew about Corso Italia and I knew about some of the other areas, about the Junction, but I didn't know about some of these other ones you mentioned, so I want to go and discover those and get to learn more about the beautiful riding of Davenport.

Importantly, what the member from Davenport brought up, and it's a question about priorities—I think the way he juxtaposed the two was very compelling. If you look at, on the one hand, what this government is proposing to do for large corporations, and if you look at the way the member for Davenport laid out all the corporate tax loopholes or input tax credits that are now going to go offline and tally the entire amount that will go into the pockets or the bank accounts of large multinational corporations, and measure that beside the benefit that this bill would give to small businesses, then there's clearly a bias, and it's not in favour of small businesses. It's not at all, like the bill reads, supporting small businesses.

This bill is a small step in providing a little assistance, but it's not what the small businesses in our communities are asking for. It's not what they need. It's not the significant change of culture or climate that would induce or encourage further growth in small businesses. It's simply not that.

I thank the member from Davenport for his speech, and I look forward to hearing more interesting and thoughtful debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Mr. Speaker, I just wonder if a quorum is present.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Is there a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga East-Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I just got an email from a small business person saying, "Why are you guys debating this? Just get on with it." So, Speaker, can I please respectfully request of all MPPs here, let's just end the debate and move this to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Davenport, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thanks to all who have participated in the debate this afternoon. I know the government is anxious to move this, but I am happy that this bill did incorporate some of our suggestions and it will, in fact, support some small businesses. We could rush past the

fact that the government in this has lost the capacity to actually generate revenue that we could use here.

When I look across the House, I see a government very much divided, I believe. I think some of you think that your mission is to deliver a social justice agenda for the province, yet the very core of your party continues to give away tax breaks to the richest. So this bill here—that's almost \$95 million. That's \$95 million that we know we could use for community services across the province. We desperately need it for transit in our city of Toronto. This is a huge shame.

This is the same government—as I said in my remarks, this should not go unnoticed. This is worthy of debate. The fact that this government promises to give a tax break, once again, to those who earn over \$500,000 a year in a few years—that is a shameful agenda, and it deserves our attention here. I would like to hear the members across the floor stand up and defend that tax cut that they are prepared to give away. Instead, they'd rather us pass on that. I don't know anybody who earns over \$500,000 a year who can't provide two cents on every dollar more back to the society that has made them wealthy.

These things deserve to be debated. We do need to support our communities. I'm lucky to live in a great province, in a great city and in the great riding of Davenport that has great small businesses. I wish that there was more focus put on those things here in our Parliament.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: I realize I'm rising at the very end of the day on Thursday, and I know all members of the Legislature are sitting at the edge of their chairs waiting for this speech that they've waited all day for. I hope that I don't disappoint, because I know that some members on the other side have asked us to curtail debate so, I guess, they can go home early. Much as it is the truth, Mr. Speaker, even if they left now, which is 10 minutes to 6 on a Thursday evening, they will be stuck in Toronto gridlock anyway, so I think I'm doing them a little bit of a favour by just staying here a few minutes longer, and hopefully that traffic can disperse a little.

I rise in this Legislature on behalf of the constituents of the riding of Cambridge, which is composed of the city of Cambridge and the township of North Dumfries. We have, Davenport, a number of business improvement areas that are responsible for our cores. People who don't really know the city of Cambridge should know that it was created in 1973 with the amalgamation of many municipalities. The three largest ones are the municipalities of Preston, Hespeler and Galt. Those areas were former towns in their own right, and each of them had downtown cores. That's one of the beauties of my community. In addition to that, I note that the township of North Dumfries, which is part of the riding in which I reside, also has a downtown in the village of Ayr, which is also a very unique place that is beautiful and that I encourage all members of this Legislature to come and enjoy.

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It's those small businesses that we talk about and we're here to pay homage to today, because they are, I think, the driver of the economy. Some 98% of all businesses in the province of Ontario are actually small businesses. These are the people who are operating our pizza shops, our retail outlets. They're doing business in the service industry. There are print shops. There are a variety of areas. Maybe they're consulting in engineering or in some social service setting. These are the men and women who wake up every day to do their work, not only for the benefit of themselves, but for their communities. These are businesses that invest their time and energy to grow, to create jobs, to invest the fruits of their labour back into the community. These are the folks who are sponsoring our hockey teams, our baseball teams, our soccer teams. These are the ones who are supporting our Little League championships, our plowing matches, our festivals. These are the folks who are the heart, the bread and butter of our communities. They give selflessly of their time and energy to make sure the community is a prosperous one and one that remains the best place to live, work and grow a business. They take part in many organizations. There's hardly a social service organization that doesn't have members of small businesses who are part of their boards of directors, who give their time selflessly to promote the good of their community in any way they can. Sometimes small business leaders end up serving in other capacities, some of which are represented right here in this Legislature, as members of the public who earn the trust of their constituents to serve in a place like this.

Prior to entering politics, Mr. Speaker, I can say from a personal perspective that, yes, I was a university professor, and yes, I was an academic, but I was also a small business owner myself. I did that for a while. I did some consulting on public policy issues, as I have a PhD in public policy and I thought I had some expertise to lend to different groups, different associations and different businesses.

This is, I think, an important topic that merits the time that we are putting into this debate. I realize that we are now probably in our ninth hour of debate on this issue—I can't exactly remember the timing—but I think each member should have the desire to stand in their place and defend small businesses in their communities. There are issues that they're facing every day. Certainly they're facing regulatory issues, red tape issues that hinder their growth. People who are in small businesses spend a lot of time filling out paperwork, whether that's for audit purposes, tax purposes, filling out the requirements of whatever association or body they belong to. This consumes a lot of time, time that I know a lot of small businesses would rather devote to growing their businesses. Those are issues that are obviously of concern to small businesses in Ontario.

I know that my colleague from Simcoe North has recently put forth a public member's bill that talks about the College of Trades and a provision in the college of

trades act that, even though it's not proclaimed, still exists. We want to see it repealed and taken off the books right away so that we never have to overtax our small businesses. That is an important aspect of small businesses, as well, because the money that they're retaining isn't because they're going to be wealthy overnight and they're going to hoard all the money—but I know a lot of small businesses are in the business of growing their business, creating jobs, doing good things on a daily basis.

I want to raise an issue of a couple of small businesses in my riding that has recently come to my attention, which I think merits some consideration. I know that we're talking about a particular provision in this legislation that deals with the employer health tax and how we manage the thresholds by which exemptions occur or do not occur, and there's great debate that we can have on those specific things, but when I see a bill, and when businesses in my community see a bill, titled the Supporting Small Businesses Act, they wonder at the end of the day what exactly is going to be of benefit to them, and that's not readily understood. They have a few threshold limits that are going to change, but at the end of the day, not very much is going to change in how they conduct their businesses.

What I want to talk about are two individuals who came to speak to me recently about their hydro. That's a challenge that I think small businesses face on a daily basis. One gentleman who came to see me—actually, he first came to see me a couple of months ago—had purchased a meat processing facility. That's obviously a labour-intensive industry. There are lots of people who get employed in that area. He invested millions upon millions of his own money to upgrade the facility, to make it a world-class facility, but when it came time to open, he got a bill from the local hydro distributor that said, "You have to pay two and a half months of your projected hydro output before we allow you to have the electricity on in your meat processing facility." That sum adds up to almost \$100,000 right off the top of this gentleman's hydro bill.

It reminded me of a gentleman who came to see me very recently, within the last month, who purchased a business that was going under and wanted to make that

business rise again. He wanted to turn it around. He was part of a group of investors who do this on a daily basis—well, not on a daily basis; it's part of what they do. They turn around struggling businesses. Again, he was faced with a bill from his local hydro distributor of almost \$100,000, which is two and a half times the projected monthly use of hydro. That deposit is exactly what it says: a deposit that is left in perpetuity. You're going to sign this \$100,000 away that can't be reinvested in your business. It can't help create jobs. It's simply going to the hydro distributor for them to have for as long as your business is open. You're not going to get that money back in five years, in 10 years, in 15 years or in 20 years.

Now, when I hear something like that, it makes me shake my head. We're supposed to be in a body that helps businesses create jobs, not blocking them from actually opening their doors.

In the case of Albertino Domingues, he just gave up. Even though he invested millions of dollars of his own money into this facility to help it grow and help create jobs, he just said, "There's no way. I've had enough." He's having problems with hydro, he's having problems with getting hogs for his processing, and he just said, "I'm giving up."

As a person who wants to see people in his community work, that is the absolute wrong message that we're sending to the business community, to investors, to help them do what I think everybody wants: to get a mom and dad of a family in a job and have that gainful employment so they can provide for their family.

So, Mr. Speaker, if we are continuing to talk about this bill, I would like to have that discussion centred on how we can actually help small businesses do what they want to do: grow their business, create jobs and build a stronger and better Ontario. That is at the crux of what we're supposed to be doing here, and I will never shy away from talking about that on behalf of my constituents.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until Monday, October 28, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
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Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
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Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
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Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

Second Session, 40th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 28 October 2013

Lundi 28 octobre 2013



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 October 2013

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 octobre 2013

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.
Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to welcome one of my constituents, Lee Griffi from Caressant Care, to Queen's Park today. He's here as part of the Ontario Long Term Care Association day, and I want to recognize all that he does for the industry and our seniors in Oxford county. I say welcome to Lee Griffi.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to introduce the woman who keeps me humble and gives me the opportunity of doing this job: my wife, Pauline Mantha.

Hon. James J. Bradley: It's my pleasure to introduce the following people here today. Our young Mr. Hauber, who's the captain of the pages today, has many people here: Michelene Hauber, mother—by the way, who was a page here, I think, in 1982, and I introduced them at that time—Peter Hauber, the father; Thomas Hauber, brother; Simon Hauber, brother; Malcolm Hauber, brother; Doris Hauber, grandparent; Daniel Hauber, grandparent; and Tom and Annette Urlocker, who were here when their daughter was here in 1982, and I was introducing them at that time. Welcome to the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's my pleasure today to introduce Darren Micallef, director of operations for the Sprucedale Care Centre in Strathroy, to Queen's Park today. Welcome, Darren.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I am pleased to welcome in the gallery Deborah Pindur, the director of new product solutions and innovations for Ryder transportation services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I would like to introduce Alicia Milner, president of the Canadian Natural Gas Vehicle Alliance, who has joined us today. I'd like to invite all members to come to a reception they're holding following question period.

Mr. Frank Klees: It's my pleasure to introduce Staff Sergeant Edmond Villamere of Aurora, Ontario; his wife, Gillian; and son Benjamin. Staff Sergeant Villamere is an officer with York Regional Police, 4 district B platoon, stationed in Richmond Hill. Benjamin is a grade 5 student who's very interested in politics and looks forward to being a page here in the Legislature at some point.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome Bath-El Balay, Hasna Syed and Justin Wei-Yu Tai to the Legislature this afternoon—or this morning. Welcome. It's been a long day already.

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to welcome my constituent Mr. Paul Rushforth, who's a member of the Ontario Long Term Care Association's board of directors. He's the chief operating officer at Leisureworld Senior Care Corp. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome representatives from the Ontario Long Term Care Association today: Candace Chartier, the CEO, and also Adrienne Spafford, Patrick McCarthy and Colleen Laing. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Lisa Gretzky from the Greater Essex District School Board to Queen's Park today.

Hon. David Oraziotti: It's my pleasure today to introduce a group of MNR staff from the Ontario Parks southeast region, as well as from the enforcement branch.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature Jason Spencer from Con Cast Pipe; Gerry Mulhern from the Ontario Concrete Pipe Association; and Wes Mazur from Grand River Occupational Health and Safety.

I'd also like to welcome the member for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek to his new seat in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not appropriate.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I hope all members of the Legislature will welcome the director of government relations from Lakehead University visiting us today, Mr. Richard Longtin.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to welcome Roy Purdy and Carol Carder, visiting from Lindsay on a Queen's Park tour and for lunch. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I'm very delighted to welcome members of the Ontario Long Term Care Association. Patrick McCarthy, Candace Chartier, Chris McKey, Adrienne Spafford and others are joining us today and look forward to seeing all of us at the reception later this afternoon.

I'd also like to welcome the Queen's University mentoring program. This program is sponsored by the legislative press gallery and is intended to give students an understanding of the roles of journalists and politicians here at Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with you later this afternoon.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure to welcome Elisa Bousada, the business development adviser for Shell Canada, who's here today with the Canadian Natural Gas Vehicle Alliance; also Mr. John Scotland, CEO of Steeves & Rozema long-term-care group.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to welcome Ruth McFarlane, who's vice-president, non-profit, for the

Ontario Long Term Care Association. She's a member from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, and I want to welcome her here today.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce a constituent from my riding of St. Paul's, Mr. Bill Dillane, who's the secretary treasurer of the Ontario Long Term Care Association and president, Responsive Health Management.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): With us today in the Speaker's gallery is a person who is familiar to all of us, from Elgin–Middlesex–London, in the 37th, 38th and Speaker in the 39th Parliament, Mr. Steve Peters. Welcome.

WEARING OF POPPIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we begin, there is a tradition that we wear poppies in the House at this time. As you can see, all sides were provided with poppies.

A reminder that they are to be worn on the left-hand side of the lapel closest to the heart and no other pin or item is above the poppy, just for everyone's sake.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEBT

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Tomorrow marks the fourth anniversary of the Standard & Poor's downgrade, one of three such downgrades Ontario has suffered under this Liberal government. These downgrades impact not only the province's cost of borrowing but that of other linked entities, such as University of Toronto, the city of North Bay, OPG, among many others. In only 10 years, you've doubled our debt and interest is now the third-largest expenditure, and interest is set to rise another \$4 billion by 2017-18 when you claim to balance the budget.

Premier, what is the government's current projection for the amount of debt Ontario will accumulate between now and 2017-18?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question, and I just want to take this opportunity to advise the House that on Thursday, November 7, we will be providing our financial economic statement update. At that point—

Interjection: Our fall economic statement.

Hon. Charles Sousa:—our fall economic statement will talk about the things that matter most to Ontarians—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order, the member from Simcoe North will come to order and the member from Prince Edward–Hastings will come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: As mentioned, we will be providing our fall economic—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Okay, I'll try again. We are going to be bringing our fall economic statement on Thursday, November 7, to talk about the things that matter most to Ontarians—talking about investing in our people. We're going to talk about investing in infrastructure strategically, as we've been doing, and we're talking about how we're going to support and continue to support an innovative business climate.

To the member opposite, the rating agencies have recognized the tremendous value of Ontario and the strong economic—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm saddened, Speaker, that he couldn't even answer the simple question, but sadder is the fact that the debt they've run up is now threatening the very things we care about. We're adding another \$20 billion to our debt this year alone, and that amount is set to rise next year.

You have put Ontario on a very slippery slope. Your own budget tells us that even a one percentage point increase in interest rates would add 400 additional million dollars to our borrowing costs. Their inability to make the tough decisions needed to reduce spending leaves a spectre of another credit downgrade hanging over Ontario's head. Tell us today, does the government's—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville will come to order. Thank you.

Just throw somebody to order to give you a chance.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker; much appreciated.

I'll ask again: Does the government's fiscal plan take into account a further credit rating downgrade?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite hasn't read the budget apparently, and he is not concerned about the well-being of Ontario by the way he's asking these questions, because the rating agencies have recognized all too well how strong Ontario's fundamentals are. It is why, through the work that we've done, we have now been the first government in over a decade in all of Canada to actually reduce spending, year over year.

We have a target in our plan for a net debt to debt ratio of 27%. That was brought in our throne speech, and we're working towards that, and we're exceeding those targets as well. In fact, we are the one and only government in all of Canada to have now brought in over 180% of those jobs, 477,000 net new jobs to the province, and we're working towards doing even more.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To illustrate just how serious the crisis we're in is, in the four minutes that we've both been standing talking, our debt has increased \$89,040—in these last four minutes.

They have shown that when it comes to making the tough decisions, they chose what's best for the Liberal Party instead of what's best for Ontario. When Ontario

needed a wage freeze, you gave eight of every 10 contracts you negotiated a raise. You're giving seven-figure bonuses to Pan Am executives when you cut physio services for seniors. You waste \$1.1 billion to save Liberal seats while residents in Vaughan and south Niagara wait for new hospitals. Why should anyone believe you can or have any desire to balance the budget by 2017-18?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Ontarians believe in what we are doing because they're investing in Ontario. Ontarians believe in where we are going because they are making efforts to invest and to provide more jobs in our great province. In fact, our deficit has gone down by \$5.6 billion more than last anticipated. The rating agencies have affirmed that. When I was down in New York, they bought up our paper—and gladly so—because they see Ontario as a good place to invest.

As mentioned, we're the first government since 1996 to actually reduce its spending. We are the lowest-cost government in all of Canada, in all orders of government, for the work that we've done. We know that the member opposite and his party want to go to a slash-and-burn policy, put us at risk and reduce our economic growth even further. Now that is haphazard and reckless, and we won't go there.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am Games. Minister, last week you excused yourself from planning and budgeting for security and transportation because you've decided it's too early—1.5 years out. But the billion-dollar Pan Am budget was set out four years ago. Did you just forget about security and transportation, the same way you forgot about the athletes' village, the diesel air-rail link, the secretariat partying and paperwork budget or the Pan Am trail? Speaker, this minister thinks he's on a pay-as-you-go plan for the Pan Am Games.

Minister, what is the cost of security and transportation?

Hon. Michael Chan: I thank the member for the question. Speaker, last week, I think the member opposite mentioned a number for security and on transportation, which is \$235 million. That number is not correct. That number is wrong. That is a fantasized number.

At the moment, we are talking to municipalities in terms of transportation. We are talking to different municipalities in terms of security. These are big games. It's a big plan to be discussed. Right now, I don't have a final number. When that number comes out, certainly, I will let the member know.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: You don't have a number. Let's put an end to the fantasy once and for all. Why don't you try again on that one, Minister? Tell Ontarians what Pan Am security and transportation will cost and how much both will impact our lives. Your platitudes are ludicrous,

and they prove that no open government can be had with the Liberals. There absolutely must be a budget because the Pan Am security officials have indicated this mystery budget is already overblown. There must be a plan because the plans to cut corners by granting security guards special police powers exist.

Minister, I'm not asking you to get creative. I know you know. What is the budget for security and transportation? Please tell us once and for all. If you don't have a number, tell us that too.

Hon. Michael Chan: The member opposite has a number. He has an untrue number, which is \$235 million, on transportation and security. Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and TO2015 are leading the development of an integrated transportation plan for the games. Transportation planning for an event of this size is complex, takes time and involves many organizations, including the province, municipalities and transit system and security planners. We are working closely with the OPP and municipal police to ensure that transportation will be safe and secure.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Minister, I suggest you sit down with the CEO of TO2015 and ask him what the security budget is. He told me it's included in the \$235-million essential services plan. If you don't know that by now, Minister, you probably should be looking for a different job.

Under your leadership, we've discovered that the \$1.4-billion budget is just a talking point. Pan Am expenditures will be at least double what you say they will. You have no control over your bureaucrats. Your organizing committee is taking taxpayers for a ride, and you refuse to be open about the cost of security and transportation.

Honestly, is this the behaviour of a minister who is actually responsible for the Pan Am Games? Minister, prove you're not just a placeholder in a B-team cabinet led by an unelected Premier. Will you be honest today or step down from your job?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister.

Hon. Michael Chan: The safety of athletes, coaches, officials, visitors and the general public is a critical element in the planning of the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games. Speaker, we are prepared to take any measures necessary to ensure the safety of citizens. We will not take risks with people's safety. Learning from large-scale games like the Vancouver Olympics, we have made a concerted effort to incorporate security in the initial planning stages of the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

New question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I tried to do it with a gentle "Order, please." If I have to be specific, I will.

Member from Toronto–Danforth, new question.

ENERGY RATES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. People and businesses in Ontario are paying the highest electricity bills in the country. It's making it harder for families to make ends meet. It's making it tougher for businesses to grow and create jobs. People and businesses in Ontario are paying bills that are two times higher than they are across the border.

Does the Premier realize that having the highest energy bills in Canada, and letting those sky-high bills grow faster than the rate of inflation, is a serious problem for business and for households?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to comment on our overall plan, but I want to just be clear that when we came into office, we were facing an energy system that was in disarray. There was a huge need for investment in transmission; there was a need for investment in generation. That is what we have done.

We now have a stable energy system in terms of green energy, the money that has been put into transmission. That is what is paramount for the people in this province. There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that having a stable, reliable energy system is exactly what we need. And the fact is, we have put in place rebates and supports for businesses and for seniors to make sure that they have an affordable supply, because stability and affordability are the cornerstones.

We needed a stable system. The NDP has not supported the initiatives that we've taken, Mr. Speaker, but nonetheless, we have got that stable system in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, for over 10 years, the Liberal Party has treated government as a tool to help the political interests of the Liberal Party. Whether the government is ignoring warnings about gas plants and then later cancelling them and costing families over \$1 billion just to save a few seats, or signing nuclear contracts worth almost \$1 billion before a project is even approved or anyone knows the final cost, does the Premier understand that people see this cynical politicking for what it is, and for once, they want to see their interests come first?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: When this government took office 10 years ago, there was a deficit in terms of infrastructure, energy and supply. We invested \$21 billion in new generation. We invested \$10 billion in new transmission. Those investments have put pressure on the rates. But what we did for the rates, which that NDP party voted against, was the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which gives a 10% discount off the bottom line in prices. We created an energy and property tax credit to help

those who need it. We've created the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program. They voted against all of this.

We are mitigating the rate increases. The pressure on rates came from our tremendously huge investments—because that opposition party let the system decline.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, back to the Premier: People are frustrated when they see that the Liberal government is focused on helping out well-connected insiders, not helping out the families that are working hard to pay the bills.

Media reports that when the Premier went to Calgary, she met with the head of TransCanada Energy, the company behind the Oakville gas plant. The Premier didn't even bring up the fact that Ontarians are paying TransCanada more money now than the Oakville gas plant is cancelled than they would have before. Families got handed a bigger bill so that a private power company could get a bigger cheque.

Why is the Premier's energy plan more focused on helping private power companies make more money than it is on helping families make ends meet?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Several days ago, we announced that we were deferring new nuclear. One of the main reasons for doing that is (1) we have a surplus of supply, and (2) we were not going to invest \$15 billion and put more pressures on rates for building power we don't need. This critic said he agrees with that decision, so there's something we agree on.

But, Mr. Speaker, they have no plan for the energy sector. They will stand up, they will criticize, they will malign, they will do everything. If they believe they have a right to govern, they have an obligation to put forward a plan. They have never done so, and I challenge them to do so.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Premier—and Premier, I'm certain you'll want to acknowledge our thoughts and our best wishes to the family of Jim Belanger and his wife, who were involved in an accident last night, returning from Ottawa to Sudbury, involving their horse trailer. They had to euthanize a horse. I just want to send our thoughts and best wishes to the family of Jim Belanger.

Horse people and track workers in Fort Erie and Sudbury and across Ontario don't think they're getting a fair shake from this Premier, and I don't blame them. She insisted that the Slots at Racetracks Program had to go because it allowed insiders at marquis tracks like Woodbine to pay themselves sky-high salaries instead of putting money back into horses. But in its place, they brought in a plan that cuts out not-for-profit tracks and rewards the same for-profit insiders that abused SARP in the first place.

Why won't the Ontario government play fair with rural Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: My thoughts are with the family, and my heart goes out to them.

What the member opposite has said is the furthest thing from the truth, Mr. Speaker. Following on the footsteps of my predecessor, who put in place the panel of Elmer Buchanan, John Snobelen and John Wilkinson to give us some advice on how we could make the horse racing industry in the province sustainable, we have got a plan in place.

The leader of the NDP has stated that she'd like to reinstate the Slots at Racetracks Program. That was an unaccountable program. All the members of the panel said that that was not a program that could be sustainable, it was not going to make the horse racing industry sustainable and it was not accountable to the people of Ontario. So we will not be reinstating that program, Mr. Speaker. Instead, we will be investing \$400 million in a five-year plan to keep the horse racing industry. All of the tracks have an opportunity to be sustainable—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker, the Premier talks about accountability, but the government—this government—is about as transparent as a brick wall.

Horse people in places like Fort Erie, Sudbury and all across the province are having a hard time making an impression on this government. Even as this government is putting not-for-profit tracks out of business, they're going all in on Woodbine, which, since the end of SARP, has conveniently gone for-profit. Is this the government's idea of making horse racing sustainable for rural Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, our idea is that we want to make sure that all the tracks in the province have a way to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to tell some members of the NDP and some members of the Tories to take it outside.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our proposal is that all the tracks in the province have an opportunity to take part in a sustainable horse racing industry into the future. In order to do that, we have put the onus on the OLG to make sure there is an integration of horse racing with the overall gaming strategy.

The folks I have spoken to, and many I have spoken to in the horse racing industry, are pleased with that. That integration was missing. They wanted to feel they were part of that overall strategy. That is what will make them sustainable, and that is our objective.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The fact is that this government is betting the farm on the Woodbine Racetrack, and horse people in Fort Erie and Sudbury are losing their shirts.

This deal isn't about making horse racing sustainable; it's about handing more market share to a for-profit giant.

Why is this government picking a big winner and putting smaller tracks out to pasture?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, what the member opposite is saying is just not true. Grand River and Western Fair are non-profit tracks, and they are going to have a sustainable future.

What we want is that the success of the tracks is attached to the success of the industry, the success of the customers coming in. That's what the plan is putting in place, Mr. Speaker.

I think that the NDP is very intent on a political goal right here. What we're trying to do is put in place the right policy so that all the tracks in the province have an opportunity to work with the ORC to have that future that will provide those jobs in rural Ontario. That is our objective, and that's what the plan is designed to do, Mr. Speaker.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Last week, you visited the Niagara region without ever really addressing the need for a new hospital in that area. When pushed about whether you would build a new hospital in south Niagara, all you stated was that your government would look at it.

The existing hospitals in Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne and Fort Erie are all in need of major renovations in order to provide care. A new hospital would actually save taxpayers money in terms of operations.

Premier, will you stand here today and commit to building a new hospital in south Niagara, as recommended by your expert Dr. Kevin Smith?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Health will want to speak to the specifics of this question, but I just want to say that it is a bit rich, coming from a member of this party, talking to us about closing hospitals, because that is the party that closed hospitals.

The point I want to make is that we are the party that has built and opened hospitals and maintained hospitals. The reality is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, it is.

Thank you.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that the plan that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin—Caledon will come to order.

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality of the plans, the documents, that the party opposite has put forward is that the exact same result would happen: There would be services cut across the board in education, in health care. We're not going there. That is where they would like to take us—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —we've been there. We've seen that picture. We're not going back to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Liberals can keep repeating that old myth as much as they want, but it's never going to make it so.

The reality is, the people of Niagara deserve a new hospital and not costly, temporary fixes on the old ones. Temporary fixes on existing hospitals will end up costing taxpayers more. In fact, Dr. Kevin Smith noted in his report that building a new hospital will save the health system \$10 million annually in operating costs.

You've already wasted billions of dollars on scandals, and you're cutting health services to Ontarians. We can't afford to keep doing this. We need a long-term investment in health care for all Ontarians, including those in Niagara.

Will you commit today to doing the right thing and giving people in south Niagara the hospital that they deserve?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There has been an astonishing change of attitude from the party opposite. It wasn't very long ago—May 2012—that the Leader of the Opposition said that hospital infrastructure would have to wait until after the books were balanced. But we're hearing a new tune now.

We have been very busy building hospitals. The member from Simcoe North, I'm sure, would be happy to tell you about Waypoint. The member from Barrie would tell you about the Royal Victoria. The member from Cambridge would tell you about the Cambridge hospital. The member from Burlington would talk about Joe Brant. The member from Halton could talk about Milton. The member from Leeds–Grenville could talk about Brockville. The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London could talk to you about St. Thomas. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke could talk to you about the Renfrew Victoria Hospital. And I'm sure the member from Wellington–Halton Hills would be more than happy to talk about Groves Memorial.

Speaker, we have been more aggressive in building hospital infrastructure than any government ever has, because of the neglect that was—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is again to the Premier. This government has repeatedly said that it has environmental, community and First Nations concerns regarding the proposed Line 9 reversal project. To quote the Premier, these "questions ... need to have answers. We need to understand exactly what the risks are."

If the Premier is so concerned about getting answers to these serious questions, why is she rejecting a provincial environmental assessment of the Line 9 reversal project?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Of course, the decision is a national government decision, the National Energy Board. We have intervened. We've taken a strong position, number one, that paramount interest should be given to public safety and environmental protection; and number two, there should be absolute consultation with the people directly involved, with First Nations and Métis communities, moving forward. There should be protection for liability for whatever damage they might cause, if something happens in the future.

We made a strong case before the National Energy Board. We will continue to advocate those principles moving forward. Indeed, we demanded that there be stress testing of the whole system to ensure public safety. I'm not sure what the outcome of that is, but we've been very responsible to a government agency in another level of government, which makes the ultimate decision.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I'm surprised to hear that this government has so much confidence in the Harper government's approach to environmental protection.

Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, Gord Miller, said he has concerns about the kind of oil, called diluted bitumen, or dilbit, that will flow through the reversed pipeline. The commissioner says if there's a spill, dilbit doesn't float on water like regular light crude, that can mostly be recovered from the surface.

Many Ontarians have concerns about the Line 9 project. Why won't the Premier allow a provincial environmental assessment to ensure that the pipeline project meets the highest environmental standards?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The National Energy Board has a very rigorous process to ensure safety and environmental standards are met.

He talks about doing an environmental assessment and overriding the constitution of this country, where the National Energy Board has the authority to look after this particular issue.

If the situation was reversed and we were doing something in the environmental area, or we were having a hearing and the federal government came down and told us what to do, you know what we would tell them and where they should go.

We're dealing with this, with respecting the constitutional areas of jurisdiction, and we have the highest standard that we're advocating on behalf of the people of Ontario.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Minister, Friday, October 25, was the date to highlight Small Business Month in Canada. Small businesses invest time and create good jobs in rural and urban communities in Ontario. It's important to recognize the contribution small businesses make across Ontario.

To build on Ontario's investment in people, infrastructure and the creation of innovative and dynamic

business environments, the province has introduced Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, aimed at ensuring small businesses receive the support they need to succeed and grow. Would the minister please provide the House with an update on what the status of the bill is?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member for his question. We've recently introduced Bill 105, as the member has indicated, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, which will be further debated this afternoon. This important bill is one that I believe all members can get behind, and we need to work together in order to pass it quickly.

Bill 105 will support small business in Ontario and will ensure that 60,000 small businesses pay less of the employer health tax. Bill 105 will eliminate that tax altogether for 12,000 small businesses right across the province.

The strength of our small businesses in Ontario was highlighted last week when two Ontario small business owners, Printables.Me and Truth Beauty Company, were recipients of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business's annual Shop Small Biz awards.

Ontario, of course, has already permanently cut the small business corporate income tax from 5.5% to 4.5%. We've reduced the regulatory burden. We know we have more to do. This important bill is part of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, it's important that Ontario encourage and support small businesses across the province. In 2012, there were 385,405 small and medium-sized firms in this province. This figure represents 99% of the total businesses in Ontario, and it provides a significant source of employment for the men and women across our province.

Minister, expand on the kind of support small businesses need in this recovering economy and how the province can continue to play a strong role in helping small businesses increase employment and build solid careers across Ontario.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, I thank the member for this important question on employment and small business. Communities across this province, both rural and urban, benefit from the jobs that our small businesses create.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business's survey results indicate that small business confidence in Canada and here in Ontario continues to climb. This means that when we support our small businesses, we're creating the right business climate for job creation.

Ontario currently has 57 small business enterprise centres helping to support our small businesses and entrepreneurs right across the province. Supports like the Ontario Network of Entrepreneurs help to bring knowledge and experience, supporting our entrepreneurs and small businesses. Our unprecedented \$295-million youth jobs strategy, which is creating 30,000 new jobs for youth, and our recently announced social enterprise strategy and our new trade strategy will also help create thousands of new jobs.

By supporting small businesses in Ontario, we're creating jobs. This is again why I'm urging everybody to support this bill, Bill 105, this afternoon.

TRADE DEVELOPMENT

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Tomorrow, Prime Minister Harper will table the agreement in principle on the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement with the European Union. This gives Ontario a tremendous opportunity to grow our economy and create good, well-paying, middle-class jobs. After CETA's ratification, Canada will be the only G8 nation with preferential access to markets in both the EU and the US.

Investors need certainty. Our debt, deficit and energy rates are far higher than anywhere else in the country. How are you going to convince foreign investors that Ontario is where they want to be?

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oh, come on, Charles—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton, come to order. She also knows I don't like it when somebody is called by anything other than their title or their riding.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Dufferin, do not help me. Do not help me.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: —have the opportunity to speak to CETA, to the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, with the European Union. Ontario, of course, was pleased, just over a week ago, to lend its support to the fact that an agreement in principle has been reached in the Canada-EU trade negotiations.

I think all of us know that the EU is actually the largest economic trading block in the entire world and has a GDP of close to \$17 trillion. This agreement between Canada and the EU is going to be so important, leading to more stable commercial relations, forming a solid base for our economic and trade relations. Of course, with Ontario being an intensive trade jurisdiction, this is extremely important. We have significant trade already with the EU, but this gives us much upside potential to increase that trade even further.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: This we know: It's leadership and vision at its best.

Speaker, it sounds like the Liberals still do not have a plan. While the Premier and her minister continue to dither, hundreds of thousands of Ontarians continue to wait for the endless parade of consultation and conversation to finish. Ontarians have had enough talk. They want action.

Our leader has a plan. We will provide a clear, predictable and measurable path to return to a balanced budget, restore the credit rating agency's faith in Ontario and build an economic climate that makes Ontario the choice destination for foreign investors.

One last time, Minister: Does your government have a real plan to help Ontario businesses capitalize on the benefits from CETA?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, I think I would be remiss if I didn't address part of the first question that came from the member opposite about encouraging foreign direct investment in this province. She may not know that, in fact, Ontario is the leader in all of North America for foreign direct investment on a per capita basis, and even when you don't take population into account, after California and New York, we come third. Foreign investment is coming to this province and is having an impact.

On this side of the House, we're interested in creating jobs. We released a new trade strategy just a few weeks ago. The PC jobs plan, as we know, is the opposite. It's firing education workers—as many as 10,000—firing 2,000 health care workers, driving down wages with harmful right-to-work—we don't work that way. On this side of the House, we believe in encouraging trade and investment.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Michael Mantha: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. On Friday, Northern Superior Resources launched a lawsuit against the Ontario government over its failure to set real guidelines on the mining process in Ontario. NSR is the fourth mining company since 2009 to bring legal action against the government over the exact same issue. The failure to get consultations under way demonstrates the misguided priority of the Liberal government and is paving the path for further disputes.

Will this province take an active role and develop a real plan for resource development and jobs in the north?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. First of all, we take our duty to consult extremely seriously. The success of that is reflected by the fact that there are well over 110 agreements in place between aboriginal communities and industry, and many other partnerships as well.

With respect to this particular matter, may I say that we remain committed to working with both parties to help foster a positive relationship, and certainly ensuring that Sachigo Lake First Nation is appropriately consulted. Our ministry staff have made significant efforts to engage with both the company and the First Nation. We've offered to facilitate discussions between them. Certainly,

we've invited the company as well to make use of our new regulatory process. We take this very seriously. We're very encouraged by the many agreements that are in place as a result of our duty-to-consult obligations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Mantha: Again, to the minister: The Liberal government claims they are ready to develop good value-added mining jobs, but the reality is that they're only ready to issue press releases about jobs instead of putting in the work to create them.

Last week, another company, Cliffs Natural Resources, said that it may pull out of the Ring of Fire because the Liberal government hasn't really set any guidelines on development. If the government continues to mismanage mining development in the north, we will see the lawsuits pile up and we will lose the opportunities.

Will the minister act now to actually develop a plan for good, value-added job creation that treats First Nations as partners?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: This is an absolute priority for our government, and the member knows it very, very well. In fact, he referenced it in his remarks on Friday, how important it was to develop good relations with First Nations in terms of the opportunities in the Ring of Fire. That's the work that we're doing with the table that has been set up between Mr. Rae, representing the Matawa First Nations, and also Frank Iacobucci, with the province. The investments that we've made in skills upgrading and training are another important part of that.

We also understand how important infrastructure is as well, in terms of that project moving forward, which is why we're looking at various options that we're going to assess. What's the best benefit to the province? What's the best benefit to northern Ontarians, the best benefit to the companies that are involved in this project? And obviously, what's the best benefit to the First Nations that can benefit so much from this extraordinarily important project?

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Speaker, my constituents rely on public transit every day to get to work and to school on time. Public transit also helps to reduce congestion, keeping cars off the road, helping to keep our air clean.

In communities across Ottawa South, residents are happy to know that construction of the Ottawa LRT has begun. The project is one of many investments by this government to grow our transportation infrastructure across the province and to lead to more economic opportunities. Like several major projects, it is crucial that it comes in on time and on budget. This government has a strong track record on this. However, we all know that on occasion, projects of this scale can face cost overruns and potentially be delayed by various factors.

Can the minister please tell us of the measures that this government has taken to ensure that large-scale transit projects come in on time and on budget?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: One of the things that has been one of the quiet successes of this government is the fact that all of our rapid transit projects across this province have been on time and on budget. I want to thank my predecessor, the former minister, the MPP for Ottawa West—Nepean, for his leadership, because he and the Premier set a very great foundation for good, solid planning and project management.

Unlike other orders of government that have seen cost overruns, we haven't. Part of that is sharing and stabilizing our purchasing by grouping the Kitchener-Waterloo line with the projects in Toronto to get bigger contracts that allow us more flexibility to stage and acquire LRT vehicles. This is why, when the leader of the official opposition wants to cancel all LRT, he endangers all of the projects across the province, because there are many municipalities that are delivering great LRT projects that I think the people of Waterloo don't want to be trying to buy on their base. That would really wreck that project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you to the minister for sharing that information. It's good to know that our government is being wise when making large investments, and it is good to know that we're working closely with municipalities across Ontario to help bring them better transit options sooner.

Residents across Ottawa are pleased to hear that we're working hard to turn investments into real transit that will help them in their everyday lives. Like in Ottawa, there are many other cities that are interested in having LRT technology introduced to help their residents get to where they are going faster—for example, Mississauga and Hamilton.

I was interested to hear this past weekend that the Leader of the Opposition proposed to cancel these planned transit investments. As a member who represents a community that is anxious for its LRT project to be completed, I worry about the opposition's reckless plan to cancel LRT contracts and remove light rail track.

I would be interested to hear of light rail transit projects in other cities, like Mississauga and Hamilton, because these projects are part of Metrolinx's Big Move—the next wave—and are contingent upon our government's investment.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The leader of the official opposition used to hate subways, because when he was a minister in the previous government, he had a passion for filling them in. Well, the good news is that he now loves subways. As a matter of fact, he has a passion for them so much, he only wants to build subways. Now he seems to hate GO and LRT and every other form of rapid transit, because he wants to do to them what he did to subways the last time he was in power.

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What he announced yesterday is that Hamilton will never see an LRT project, after decades of waiting. What he has announced—and I'm sure the MPPs from Durham and Whitby—Oshawa are really happy to see their bus rapid transit system and their LRT programs cut. I'm sure

the member for Newmarket—Aurora is really happy to see all future Viva and GO expansion—and is happy with a single track all the way to Barrie. I'm sure the member from Barrie is going to have fun explaining why that single track is never going to be twinned and why two-way all-day service—why Hamilton's, why Waterloo's LRT is compromised, why Finch West rail—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

INVASIVE SPECIES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Premier: People are concerned about serious threats to our Great Lakes, and your government seems paralyzed as far as taking any action. I don't see any action. You talk about your strategy, your goals, your intentions, setting up panels but no action where immediate action in conjunction with Great Lakes states and the federal government is crucial and long overdue.

You have tabled yet another environmental bill, previously killed by prorogation, a bill setting up more panels, a guardian council.

Premier, this all does nothing to deal with the clear and present danger of an invasion of Asian carp. Grass carp and bighead carp are already in Lake Erie. Silver carp—these are the ones that jump 10 feet out of the water—and black carp are on their way. What have you done about those?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In regard to the second part, I'll refer that to the Minister of Natural Resources. But this is quite rich coming from a political party and a caucus that voted against the Great Lakes Protection Act, widely hailed by a good cross-section of the people of the province of Ontario as yet another positive step in protecting the Great Lakes. Two of the parties in this House, the Liberal Party—the government—and the New Democratic Party, voted in favour of the legislation, bringing it to committee for further consideration and representation. I find it passing strange that the member would ask a question about the Great Lakes when, in fact, his party is opposing a major initiative designed to protect the Great Lakes in the province of Ontario. It once again demonstrates how difficult it is to be part of a party that wants you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Premier, with all due respect, this is an MNR issue; this isn't an environmental issue. Two Asian carp, the grass carp, have now been found in my riding at the mouth of Grand River, down on Lake Erie. Three Asian bighead carp have been found in western Lake Erie. These and the silver carp, the jumpers, and the black carp can access Lake Michigan through the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal. Asian carp can also get directly into Lake Erie from Eagle Marsh. This invasion of Asian carp will be devastating to our Great Lakes. They eat everything.

Premier, billions and billions of tourism fishery dollars are at stake. We need action, not more environmental laws, strategies, panels or dithering. This is an MNR issue, not Environment. Why will you not marshal the resources, take action, work with the Great Lakes states, work with both levels of federal government on both sides of the border—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Put your MNR guy to work—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. When I stand, everyone sits.
Minister.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. This is something that we do take very seriously with respect to the protection of our natural resources with respect to the Great Lakes. I should tell you that the Premier met with the Great Lakes governors, probably the first time this meeting has taken place in nearly a decade, on Mackinac Island in the Mackinac straits just recently. I can tell you that our government is working closely with the federal government and with border enforcement officers as well.

In fact, we have intercepted 39,000 pounds of Asian carp destined for Ontario markets at the border. We have established an Invasive Species Research Centre, and we are deploying staff and resources necessary to help prevent the spread of Asian carp in our lakes. As well, MNR has implemented an Asian carp response plan in partnership with DFO.

We deployed field crews to the Grand River, and the testing on this carp was that the carp was sterile and non-productive. We're going to continue to monitor—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question today is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Good morning, Minister. On October 10, my friend and colleague the member from Essex met with the senior engineer for Ontario and other senior officials involved with the Herb Gray Parkway. We were told that within two weeks, they were going to be completing specialized testing on the interior rods and the durability of the concrete in those defective girders—and decisions made on whether to haul them out of there.

Minister, that was nearly three weeks ago. When will the results of those tests be available? When will the people in my part of this province get the answers to the questions they've been asking for quite some time now?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Again, I want to thank the member for his diligence on this file. I appreciate his continuing to raise this issue.

We have been very concerned, Mr. Speaker, as you know. When I initiated the independent review in July, I also gave direction that the Ministry of Transportation

must intercede and do independent testing of the work that was done by the [inaudible]. I want to be very candid: It took us longer than we had hoped to get access to the girders. We've had access to the girders now for several weeks. Those tests are now in their final stages. Some of that work, because of the specialized nature of it around ductility, was sent to the US. I expect it will be within a week or two, if not days, before we have the result.

I made a very clear commitment that as soon as I had that report and the chief engineer had it, we will arrange a briefing so that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Glen R. Murray:—you do that.

I continue to be very, very concerned about this project and about the safety. As I've said, we will not allow a single girder in there that doesn't meet standard.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Minister, the mayor of the city of Windsor and city councillors are writing a letter. They want answers. I've asked for a public meeting about future safety for the motorists who will be using that parkway and driving under those defective girders. I've asked for a public meeting. The contractor is going to hold the public meeting, but they're not going to talk about the girders; they're going to talk about the landscaping on top of the girders. That doesn't satisfy the people in my part of this province.

Why isn't the minister demanding a public meeting so that the people in Windsor and Essex county most affected by these decisions finally have an opportunity to get answers on this ongoing controversy on the biggest infrastructure project in the province's history?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I again want to emphasize there is nothing that I disagree with in what the member is saying. I think we are of one mind on that.

I walk a balance between trying to ensure aggressive enforcement of our standards—which I think we've done. The independent review being called by a minister was, I think, unprecedented in about a quarter century. We have been working with Mr. Cripps, who's the chief engineer. I try very hard not to politically interfere. I think we've done that successfully in walking that balance between letting the engineers and the planners make the determinations and giving them the time, the space and, quite frankly, the financial resources, which they've had considerable amounts of, to make these determinations.

Later this week, Mr. Cripps will come and brief me, and brief you shortly after, with his best determination of how we can do that. We've also offered him up to the city of Windsor to do a briefing for city council and for the public. I'm happy to work with the member to create an appropriate venue to ensure that information can be exchanged, and share his concern that this must continue to be a public and transparent process.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As our population ages,

more and more families in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood are faced with finding the right long-term-care homes for their loved ones. Residents want to know that they can live comfortably in their new homes, and their families need to know that they will be properly cared for.

Many families in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood who are undergoing this transition are worried about their loved ones' care and safety. Through you, Speaker: Could the minister tell this House what she's doing to protect residents of long-term-care homes and to ensure people get the best possible care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for this important question. Today, we're joined by representatives of the Ontario Long Term Care Association. I want to thank them for the very important work that they do.

Speaker, our seniors worked long and hard to build this great province. They deserve comfort and care as they move into their later years. That's why our government set a new standard in 2010 with strong legislation to ensure better care and safety in long-term-care homes.

1130

To assist with this, resident and family councils are now providing residents and loved ones a direct say in long-term-care home operations, and Health Quality Ontario publicly posts performance indicators so we can measure our success and so we can focus on those areas that still need improvement.

Going forward, I will continue to work with long-term-care homes, the CCACs and LHINs to implement recommendations of the sector-led long-term-care task force.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister. I know that will help to give some peace of mind to the families in Scarborough–Guildwood who have loved ones in long-term-care homes. We all know that when it comes down to it, quality of care really depends on the relationship between the caregiver and the resident.

I know that there are thousands of front-line workers giving specialized, personalized care in long-term-care facilities in my riding and across Ontario. Could the minister please tell this House what she is doing to support workers in Ontario's long-term-care facilities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: That is a very good question, and I want to thank the member again for that question. One of the great joys in my job is the ability to visit long-term-care homes. I recently had the opportunity to visit Bloomington Cove with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Oak Ridges–Markham. Together, we witnessed the passion for providing resident-centred care and the focus on quality of life that front-line workers bring with them each and every day.

People who work in long-term-care homes are the angels of our health care system. I want to thank the thousands of dedicated Ontarians who work hard every single day to bring comfort and care to residents of long-term-care homes.

We have funded more than 10,000 new full-time long-term-care staff since 2003. Residents First is providing front-line staff the knowledge and skills they need to provide safer and better care, and Behavioural Supports Ontario is helping staff to better care for patients with dementia.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Finance; good morning, Minister.

Minister, there has been much talk about the 15% auto insurance premium reduction. We, of course, have been on record as saying that you will not achieve this reduction without a plan of action. However, I recently heard that a number of non-standard auto insurance companies have been brought in by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario and directed to submit filings with rate reductions.

Are you pleased with this progress?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. It gives me the opportunity to again reinforce the commitment made by this government over these past many years to tackle fraud and go after the expensive cost of claims that affects high premiums in our province relative to other parts of Canada. As a result of those endeavours and those efforts, and the work done by many of my colleagues, rates have now started to go down.

More importantly than that, we now have more regulatory oversight by FSCO, enabling those insurance companies the opportunity to now file for lower rates. I'm pleased to say that because of the competitive nature of the industry, a number of those companies have now advertised lower rates, and I encourage everyone to shop around.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, your plan of inaction is clearly showing. I find it interesting that the government is giving priority to non-standard insurance companies. Non-standard insurance companies in Ontario are defined, according to one website of a company, as "specializes in providing personal automobile insurance for private passenger vehicles used for non-commercial purposes, to individuals who do not qualify for the standard insurance market."

To translate, it means that non-standard companies insure the worst drivers on the roads: the drunk drivers, the speeders, the drivers with multiple accidents—those who endanger our lives on the roads. And yet, your government has decided to start your rate reductions with these drivers, while leaving the good drivers—the ones who make our roads safer—out in the cold.

You acted without a plan, playing bumper-sticker politics with the third party in order that they would prop you up in the budget. Minister, why do you think bad drivers deserve a better rate reduction than good drivers?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The point of our exercise and the work that's being done is to reduce rates, on average, for drivers in our province and to benefit those good

drivers who deserve lower rates. The member opposite and his party have done nothing to support this cause, and now they are asking questions about an issue that is taking hold and that we are acting upon, and we will continue to work on behalf of the people of Ontario. We will continue to champion consumers who deserve lower rates with or without your support.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Children with autism in Ontario can wait years after being assessed as suitable to receive the IBI treatment that they need. When they finally get into a program, their parents often see their child make great strides forward in their development. Unfortunately, we have heard many stories for years of parents being left in the dark when their child gets cut off from these services with no explanation.

Will the minister come clean on autism treatment in Ontario and promise these parents full transparency regarding how decisions are made with respect to the treatment of their children?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I thank the member for the question with respect to a very important topic with my ministry, and that is services for children with autism. It's an area that we've been doing quite a bit of work on. We have an expert committee that's reviewing all our IBI and all our programing for autism. It's very difficult for families. I've met with many families that have children with these challenges. We are absolutely determined to assist the families in this province to get the services for their children. In fact, earlier this summer, we announced an additional \$5 million for autism intervention programs to get more children into service and to help more families. So, certainly, we are working towards autism and have many programs in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm going to go back to the minister. Doug Ward has watched his severely autistic son, Mitchell, go from pointing and gesturing to stringing together full sentences, thanks to IBI therapy. But now, Kinark family services has told the Wards that Mitchell is being cut off of IBI with little explanation.

Minister, your government finally created the independent review mechanism earlier this year after promising in 2010 that it would be in place in the fall of 2011. This was meant to be a process for families to appeal decisions like this. Mr. Ward reports that only now, months after hearing that they're going to be cut off, did Kinark finally tell him about the independent review mechanism. Minister, can you please explain to me, to Mr. Ward and to the countless other families just exactly how decisions are made with regard to the treatment of their children with autism?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, to the member, I'm not familiar with this particular case in terms of this specific one, but when it comes to services—to IBI services, in fact—we removed the previous age six cut-off for IBI.

We have been investing in autism services. We did introduce the independent review mechanism if there are issues with decisions that are made.

These are clinical decisions. These aren't decisions that we make independently. They're independent. They're by individual to individual in terms of what their needs are, and there's a spectrum of supports that are available. So in terms of what supports are available or at what times and what transitions are required from IBI to other autism behavioural-type programs, to transitioning into school and into other types of transitions—these are clinical decisions that are made between the clinician and the family and the child and the service organization. So that's where we're at with them.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Labour. In my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, there is a large population of newcomers. Many of them find work through a temporary help agency. For the most part, these agencies are very helpful in helping my constituents find gainful employment. But at the same time, I hear concerns about their employment standards and the health and safety issues they're facing in the workplace. I hear concerns about hours of work, vacation pay and worries about hazards in the workplace.

We all know that vulnerable workers are the least likely to speak out about violations in fear of losing their jobs. Our workers must be confident that their workplace must be held accountable for obeying the rules and that our government is protecting them at work.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, what are you doing to ensure the rights of all Ontario workers are being upheld?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member for a very important question. Absolutely, all our constituents can rest assured that the Ministry of Labour is out there in workplaces across the province, ensuring that workers know their rights and that employers are living up to their responsibilities.

Speaker, I want to give special recognition to the member from Brampton—Springdale and the member from Brampton West. Both of them have worked very hard on the issues of regulation of temp agencies. In fact, it was the member from Brampton West who brought in a private member's bill in 2006 that resulted in a law that was passed through this Legislature in 2009, the first province in Canada to regulate temporary agencies across the province. It made sure that employees were not unfairly prevented from being hired directly by employers, prohibited agencies from charging fees to workers for such things as resumé writing and interview preparation, and made sure that workers know their rights under the Employment Standards Act.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I ask for your indulgence and that of the House to please join me in welcoming our page Victoria Meola's parents, who are in the public gallery here to support their daughter. Victoria's mother, Diana Meola, and father, Luc Meola, are here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome Aaron Gao, who is the vice-president of ENN. The head office of ENN is in my riding. Welcome to Queen's Park.

I would like to also invite all members to come to the reception taking place after—oh, sorry.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CAMPBELLFORD LIONS CLUB

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It was a great pleasure yesterday to attend the Campbellford Lions 60th anniversary in beautiful Campbellford, nestled among the rolling hills of Northumberland in the municipality of Trent Hills.

I don't have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, how significant volunteer organizations like the Campbellford Lions are to making our communities not only great places to live, work and play, but grow as a community. For 60 years, the Lions have initiated and implemented a vast number of projects, including the Lions beach along the Trent-Severn in Campbellford. It is a lovely beach and picnic area, which has enhanced our community. In fact, the annual polar bear dip takes place at the Lions beach, helping to raise money for the local hospital.

In attendance for the celebration were, of course, the Campbellford Lions and a very strong turnout from other Lions chapters from Trenton, Brighton, Cobourg, Stirling, Peterborough and Norwood. The icing on the cake, however, was the presence of Mr. Bob Bennett, one of the original Campbellford Lions.

I congratulate the Campbellford Lions on reaching this great milestone and wish them all the very best moving forward.

PANORAMA ITALIANCANADIAN

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like today to extend my personal congratulations to Panorama ItalianCanadian on celebrating 10 years of publication. For a decade now, this magazine has played a vital role in honouring Italian-Canadian culture, heritage and accomplishments. It helps Italian Canadians stay in touch with their roots while celebrating the achievements the community has made here in Canada.

The magazine has become a staple of Italian-Canadian households, including my own. Residents in York South-Weston and beyond enjoy reading each edition to keep current with topics and events important to the community. It is a great and very made-in-Ontario example of the important role cultural community media plays in building our multicultural society.

I personally would like to thank Enzo Di Mauro and Roberto Bandiera for their service, hard work and successful efforts to ensure that the community has a strong voice. I would also like to thank their families, as this is a family endeavour.

I congratulate both of the editors on their efforts over the last 10 years, and I wish them continued success in the decades to come.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, this morning I delivered almost 13,000 letters to the Minister of the Environment from people in my riding. They are people who are gravely concerned about the proposal to put a landfill site in a quarry in Beachville, people who are concerned about the impact on our environment, especially our water.

I share their worry about locating a landfill that close to the Thames River and on fractured limestone. While people have a right to apply for a landfill, the minister has the duty to turn that application down if it will put groundwater at risk.

I want to commend everyone who took time to share their concerns, from the lawn signs, the sign rallies, the petitions I've read in the Legislature to the letters and emails they've sent to the minister, including the 13,000 I delivered today.

I want to applaud the work of the community organizations: Oxford People Against the Landfill, Oxford Coalition for Social Justice, the Ingersoll District Nature Club and Oxford Green Watch. I've been pleased to meet with many of them, and I know they have worked hard, not only to raise serious concerns about the landfill, but to make the community aware of the proposal and how everyone will have a say.

Comments on the draft terms of reference are due by October 30, so we need to ensure that our community's concerns are heard loud and clear. Today I want to add my voice to theirs and ask the Ministry of the Environment to ensure that a landfill is not allowed to jeopardize Oxford county's access to safe, clean water.

EID AL-ADHA

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just wanted to say Eid Mubarak and happy Eid al-Adha to the Association of Progressive Muslims, who are here today and shared with us a wonderful lunch.

Also, some background as to the festival: There are people now returning from the hajj in Mecca, and we welcome them back home, and people celebrating the

Muslim faith with their families; we wish them well. Of course, it's based on the sacrifice of Ibrahim—or Abraham, depending on your faith—and Ishmael. What's interesting about that story, which sounds very gory to someone who perhaps is not part of a worshipping community, is that it really is a story about giving of what's best of yourself, giving that which is most precious of yours, to God. That is what this festival is all about. We celebrate their generosity, their commitment and their contributions to our community and we wish them a joyous time.

Right after 9/11, our church welcomed the Jami Mosque, which is the oldest mosque in Toronto, to come worship with us; it's in my riding. I want to send a particular set of congratulations to them and to their families, and again wish all Muslims well at this time of celebration.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: This week marks the end of Small Business Month in Ontario. Small businesses are the backbone of our economy. Small and medium-sized businesses in our province represent over 99% of all businesses in Ontario. They are important partners for Ontario in building vibrant and strong communities, and we are poised to continue this trend, which is why our government recently introduced Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. This bill will help over 60,000 small businesses in Ontario, helping to ensure that they pay less employer health tax, and will also eliminate the tax for 12,000 small businesses across the province.

This province has already taken significant measures to reduce costs for small businesses. We have permanently cut the small business corporate income tax rate from 5.5% to 4.5%. We have eliminated the small business deduction surtax. Since 2008, we've cut red tape, removing over 80,000 regulatory burdens for small business. The ONE network gives entrepreneurs access to business advisers, strategists and market analysts in 86 offices across Ontario and includes business services like business advisory services, access to regional innovation centres for tech-based entrepreneurs, helping with skills development, and our small business enterprise centres, which are partnerships between the province of Ontario and local municipalities focusing on main street businesses supporting the local economy.

ABILITIES CENTRE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm very pleased to advise the House of a significant award won last week by the Abilities Centre, which is of course located in my riding of Whitby-Oshawa. The Abilities Centre is a 125,000-square-foot sports, recreation and arts facility that can be enjoyed by everyone but was specifically designed for use by people of differing abilities. Fitness equipment can be used by people in wheelchairs. Braille signs and specialized flooring assist people with low vision, and

pictorial signs help people who cannot read wayfind. These are only a few of the features incorporated into the building design.

Last week, an international award for accessibility was presented to the Abilities Centre in Cologne, Germany, by the president of the International Paralympic Committee, Sir Philip Craven, on behalf of the IPC and the International Association for Sports and Leisure Facilities. These awards have been described as the leading global awards for accessibility. There were 125 submissions received in this competition from over 30 countries, and the Abilities Centre won one of only five awards of distinction. The jury noted that the centre was built to the highest standards of accessibility, far exceeding the regulatory requirements.

The award was co-presented to the building's architects, Bregman and Hamann, and the project architect, Mark Berest, was in Cologne to receive it along with Abilities Centre representatives.

While the architecture is both beautiful and fully accessible, what goes on inside the Abilities Centre is equally as inspiring. The staff are working tirelessly on developing cutting-edge programs to ensure that all members of our community have an opportunity to participate in the programs.

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In conclusion, this is an amazing award for the Abilities Centre and truly puts Whitby on the world stage in developing an inclusive community. Congratulations to the centre.

HALLOWEEN

M^{me} France Gélinas: Halloween is almost here, and I'm sure the pages are excited about this, because there are ghosts in this House. Ask Mr. Speaker.

On October 18, I had the pleasure to visit one of the communities in my riding, called Cartier. The Cartier Community Centre, with the help of parents, has organized Halloween festivities for the last 20 years that include a costume competition and walk through a haunted house, and the older kids get to stay up for a dance. I commend the Cartier Community Centre and all the volunteers for their efforts. I will admit that I was a little bit spooked going through the haunted house, which included a huge aquarium with octopus and the whole thing.

Another Halloween attraction in my riding is the Terror Train, which has attracted 3,800 people so far. It is in its third year. It is hosted by the Northern Ontario Railroad Museum in Capreol, and well worth going. The outdoor maze is a railyard haunted by clowns. It provides a very good fright, and many don't make it through. This is mainly thanks to the students from Bishop Carter Alexander Catholic Secondary School, Confederation Secondary School and St. Anne Elementary School.

If you're in the west end of my riding, in Walden, you can go to the Anderson Farm Museum, which will also have a haunted house.

I want to end by welcoming back my assistant, Damien Waddell. He's back at work today after a near-death accident. Welcome back, Damien.

HISTOIRE D'ORLÉANS

M. Phil McNeely: Monsieur le Président, comme vous le savez, l'année 2013 fut une année forte en émotions pour la communauté d'Orléans. Une page d'histoire s'est tournée en célébrant le 400^e anniversaire du passage de Champlain à la hauteur de l'Île Petrie.

Je salue donc l'initiative de la société francophone du patrimoine et de l'histoire d'Orléans, de la Zone d'amélioration commerciale du Coeur d'Orléans et de leurs collaborateurs, qui procédaient, dimanche dernier, au dévoilement d'un recueil de capsules historiques devant un public de près de 400 personnes dans notre superbe centre Shenkman.

Ces capsules, qui seront d'ailleurs reproduites sur des plaques et installées en plein coeur d'Orléans, sur le boulevard St. Joseph, nous permettront de remonter le temps à la découverte de l'histoire du boulevard St. Joseph, de 1950 à 1960. Une des capsules du recueil porte d'ailleurs sur la ferme McNeely, et j'en suis fort honoré.

J'aimerais souligner le travail exceptionnel de la présidente de la SFOPHO, M^{me} Nicole Fortier, et des membres du comité organisateur, soit : Colette Côté, Pierre Chartrand, Marcelle Duford, Nicole Fortier, Gynette Lacasse, Guy Legault, Françoise Miller et Nicole Patry.

Je veux aussi saluer tous les descendants des familles honorées par ces plaques historiques qui se sont joints à la célébration. Merci.

GARRY COOKE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege to pay tribute to my friend and constituent Garry Cooke, who recently received a distinguished award, the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship. Garry is one of only eight Ontario residents to receive this award presented by His Honour Lieutenant Governor David Onley on Thursday, October 17.

As a volunteer, Garry Cooke has been active in the business community and in organizations such as the Navy League and the Royal Canadian Legion. Garry is best known, however, in Ontario for his commitment of almost 50 years with the Ontario Association for Community Living. Garry is a former president of Community Living Ontario. He's also involved in the Canadian organization. He is a leader and advocate for community living in his hometown of Bowmanville in the Durham region, and indeed all of Ontario will benefit.

Garry's leadership helped create the Clarington Project, offering recreational and educational activities for disabled people in Durham region.

Thank you, Garry, for working so hard to support and encourage people with developmental disabilities in Durham and throughout Ontario.

I also want to publicly congratulate and thank Christine Elliott and Jim Flaherty and the Abilities Centre Durham organizers—a great facility that indeed will be very helpful to persons suffering with developmental disabilities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

NOTICES OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I wish to inform the House that the late show standing in the name of Mr. Jackson, addressed to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan Am Games, has been withdrawn.

Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning Asian carp in the Great Lakes. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to move a motion without notice concerning the order of precedence for private members' bills.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we have agreement to present a motion without notice? Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business for Thursday, October 31, 2013, be changed such that Mr. Balkissoon assumes ballot item number 52 and Mr. Vanthof assumes ballot item number 54.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Agreed? Carried.
Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition that was sent to me on behalf of my constituents, and it's on Bill 91.

"Whereas the Ontario government has approved massive increases to Ontario Tire Stewardship's eco fees for agricultural tires, increasing some fees from \$15.29 to \$352.80, \$546.84 or \$1,311.24;

"Whereas Ontario imposes tire eco fees that are dramatically higher than those in other provinces;

"Whereas other provincial governments either exempt agricultural tires from recycling programs or charge a minimal fee of up to perhaps \$75;

"Whereas these new fees will result in increased costs for our farmers and lost sales for our farm equipment dealerships;

"Whereas the PC caucus has proposed a new plan that holds manufacturers and importers of tires responsible for recycling, but gives them the freedom" and flexibility "to work with other businesses to find the best way possible to carry out that responsibility;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please suspend the decision to significantly increase Ontario Tire Stewardship's fees on agricultural and off-the-road tires pending a thorough impact study and implementation of proposals to lower costs."

I'm pleased to sign, support and send it to the desk with Christina, one of the pages.

FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, on behalf of my colleague from Ottawa Centre.

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to look after their sick or injured family members without fearing that they will lose their jobs at such a vulnerable time;

"Whereas the people of Ontario deserve to be able to spend time looking for a child that has disappeared, or take time off to grieve the death of a child that was murdered without fearing that they will lose their jobs;

"Whereas the federal government has recently extended similar leaves and economic supports to federal employees;

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario families and wish to foster mental and physical well-being by allowing those closest to sick or injured family members the time to provide support free of work-related concerns;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act."

I fully support this and I give it to page Arianna.

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AIR QUALITY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

"Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

"Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manu-

facturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

"Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and ...

"Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

"Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false 'fails', which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program."

I proudly support my constituents and sign this.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

"Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

"Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

"Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

"That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route."

I couldn't agree more. I'm signing this, and I'm going to give it to Evan to be delivered.

WASTE REDUCTION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: "Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas protecting the environment should be everyone's responsibility, including manufacturing and material producing companies; and

"Whereas it is important to require producers to be financially and environmentally responsible for recycling the goods and packaging they sell in Ontario, and to divert these wastes from landfill to recycling to drive innovation, generate new jobs, and new Ontario-made products; and

"Whereas new approaches are needed that reflect ideas and recommendations from the recycling sector that are designed to improve current recycling systems, to increase recycling and diversion rates, and better protect our environment;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 91, the Waste Reduction Act, 2013, introduced on June 6, 2013, by the Ontario Minister of Environment."

I support the petition, and I affix my signature and hand it over to Victoria.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

"Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

"Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Phoebe.

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I'm presenting it on behalf of my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre.

"Whereas the agri-food industry is now, and has historically been, one of the primary economic drivers in Ontario; and

"Whereas the people of Ontario support local processors and producers in Ontario through purchasing and

consuming locally grown and raised fruits, vegetables, meat and processed food products; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario, and the Premier of Ontario, support Ontario farmers and Ontario food producers by leading by example; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario celebrates local Ontario producers and processors and promotes the good things grown, harvested and made in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, during spring of 2013, Bill 36, the Local Food Act."

Speaker, I fully support it, and I am giving it to page Jack.

DARLINGTON NUCLEAR GENERATING STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: This is in response to the cancellation of the nuclear plants in Darlington. It reads as follows:

"Whereas approximately 20% of Ontario's electricity is produced at the Darlington generating station" in my riding of Durham; and

"Whereas in addition to refurbishing the four existing reactors at the Darlington the building of new capacity is important for the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for jobs and investment in our Ontario;

"Whereas a study by the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters in 2012 concluded the building of a new two-reactor plant at Darlington would directly employ more than 10,000 people and would support employment for an additional 10,000 others in Canada for approximately a five-year period;

"Whereas Ontario's Ministry of Energy says Ontario Power Generation has already spent an estimated \$180 million in preparation proceeding with the two new Darlington reactors;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Ontario's elected MPPs and the provincial government reaffirm their commitment to the complete refurbishment of all four units at the Darlington generating station and that the Ontario government reinstate the original plan for the completion of two new reactors at the Darlington generating station."

I'm pleased to sign and support it and present it to page Christina for the second time today.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: Signatures collected over the Thanksgiving weekend: It's a petition titled "Stop the Gravy Train—Call an Election."

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers' dollars on cancelled gas plants; and

"Whereas the people in Ontario have lost confidence in the McGuinty/Wynne government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Request the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to call an election immediately."

I agree and sign my name.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government admits power prices will increase an additional 46% by 2015; and

"Whereas a recent study found the Liberal government's renewable energy subsidy program is adding \$5.2 billion in costs to Ontarians on their tax and hydro bills, while the political decision to cancel the Mississauga and Oakville gas plants on the eve of the 2011 provincial election will further drive up rates; and

"Whereas the soaring cost of electricity is straining family budgets, particularly in rural Ontario, and hurting the ability of manufacturers and businesses in the province to compete and create new jobs; and

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for families in rural Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to bring an end to the current government's scandalous mismanagement of Ontario's energy sector by enacting policies that will put the province's consumers, farmers and employers ahead of special interests."

It's a pleasure for me to affix my signature, Speaker, and send it to the table with page Evan.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas cellular communications towers are proposed to be built in the vicinity of Bronte in Oakville;

"Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications towers under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell towers;

"Whereas the town of Oakville has very limited jurisdiction in the placement of cellular towers;

"Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the proposed location and proximity to residential areas;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada grant municipalities the right to have enhanced participation in the placement of cellular communications towers in residential areas; and

"That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the construction of cellular towers within 500 metres of residential homes until the implementation of an improved municipal approval process."

Speaker, I agree with this, will sign it and send it down to the table with Sarhan.

1330

RURAL SCHOOLS

Mr. John O'Toole: This is another petition from the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Cartwright High School is an important part of the Blackstock and area community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised in the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that, 'Rural schools help to keep communities strong'; and

"Whereas schools in rural areas are community places; and

"Whereas Cartwright students, families, friends and staff have created an effective learning experience that emphasizes a community atmosphere, individual attention and full participation by students in school activities; and

"Whereas the framework of rural schools is different from urban schools and therefore deserves to be governed by a rural school policy; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep rural schools open in communities such as Blackstock;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That Dalton McGuinty and the Minister of Education support the Cartwright High School community and suspend plans to close Cartwright High School under the school board's accommodation review process until the province develops a rural school policy that respects the value of smaller schools in rural communities of Ontario."

I'm pleased to sign it and support it and present it to Aiden, one of the student pages.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Auditor General of Ontario defines the global adjustment charge on hydro bills as 'mostly consisting of the difference between the market price and the price paid to generators as set by the board for OPG or under contract with the government or the OPA'; and

"Whereas the Auditor General says the global adjustment has been rising steadily over the last few years and is expected to continue to rise from \$700 million (prior to the 2009 passage of the Green Energy Act) to \$8.1 billion by 2014; and

"Whereas the Liberal government's 2010 fall economic statement stated that hydro bills are expected to rise 46% by 2015, and that new renewable power generation would account for 56% of that increase; and

"Whereas small to mid-sized businesses across Ontario are seeing the global adjustment portion of their monthly hydro bills increase significantly to the point that it is now larger than the actual energy portion of their bills; and

"Whereas many of those businesses are now delaying investment or hiring, or both, and considering either closing or moving outside of the province of Ontario as a result of delivered-to-market industrial energy rates that are now the highest in North America;

"We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reverse course on its expensive energy policy by cancelling the feed-in tariff (FIT) subsidies and treating Ontario's energy as an economic development tool so that it once again is a competitive advantage for Ontario in retaining and attracting jobs and investment."

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with the page.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIRNESS AND COMPETITIVENESS IN ONTARIO'S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ ET LA COMPÉTITIVITÉ DANS L'INDUSTRIE ONTARIENNE DE LA CONSTRUCTION

Mr. McNaughton moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to alter bargaining rights conferred by pre-1980 working agreements in the construction industry / Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail pour modifier le droit de négocier conféré par des accords de fait conclus avant 1980 dans l'industrie de la construction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. McNaughton.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to my bill, Bill 74, entitled the Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario's Construction Industry Act. That is really what this bill is all about: fairness and competitiveness. I am extremely proud of Bill 74, Speaker.

As you know, as a result of an Ontario Labour Relations Board decision, an Ontario construction company, EllisDon, is facing a significant competitive disadvantage in bidding for construction projects across the province of Ontario.

In the spring, this very House supported legislation that would remove this unfair uncertainty and settle the issue permanently. This important bill went to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs. We had hearings and debate, and it has returned to the House without amendment and is now ready to be passed into law.

I'm sure I don't need to remind anyone that over the past decade, Ontario has experienced extraordinary economic decline. The facts speak for themselves, Speaker: 600,000 men and women unemployed, rapidly escalating energy prices, historic deficits, and a doubling of Ontario's debt that will both stifle job creation and burden future generations.

While we all know these facts well, more troubling trends are becoming apparent. Over the past decade, Ontario has experienced a net loss of leading global companies. We are now seeing homegrown Ontario companies opening factories and plants in the United States and elsewhere outside of Ontario. Despite prolonged unemployment, the province faces unprecedented skilled labour shortages. Ineffective economic development programs continue, even though they have failed to deliver results. This is the McGuinty-Wynne government's record, and this is Ontario's future if we stay on the same path that we're on today.

You see, Speaker, we now face a critical choice about Ontario's future. Either we implement the sensible policies that will help create jobs and bring prosperity, or we accept a future of high debt, declining public services and living well below our economic potential.

Our party, the official opposition, has brought forward a series of sensible policies in our Paths to Prosperity series of white papers, and I encourage folks to take a look and review some of the ideas contained within.

But of course, today, Speaker, we're here to talk about my Bill 74, which I have brought before this House in order to address a newly uncovered loophole that has recently been found, and to stand up for a local job creator in my backyard. This loophole is putting EllisDon, an established Ontario construction firm, at a decided disadvantage in bidding for industrial, commercial and institutional contracts outside of the city of Toronto.

London's EllisDon is an employee-owned company, employing over 1,000 workers, both union and non-unionized, throughout Ontario, and is an all-around success story.

Speaker, I envision a province known for its inventiveness and innovation, but to achieve that, we must work with our entrepreneurial hubs and support those who are driving growth and innovation. We must support those who are creating jobs and helping to grow Ontario's economy, and that is why I'm pleased to be standing up for this important piece of legislation and this important business here today.

EllisDon is under threat. This is a company that is widely known as a community leader in London and a company that has earned significant acclaim, including being named 2013's number-two best employer in Can-

ada, a platinum member of Canada's 50 best-managed companies and one of Canada's top 100 employers in 2013 by Mediacorp Canada.

In fact, on Friday night, EllisDon CEO and president Geoff Smith was named 2013's Entrepreneur of the Year. This award celebrates the contribution and spirit of entrepreneurs everywhere and is in its 20th year of honouring the country's most impressive entrepreneurs from all areas of business.

You see, Speaker, unfortunately, a single working agreement that was made all the way back in 1958 has been dredged up, and a recent, unfair decision by the Ontario Labour Relations Board puts EllisDon's future at risk and threatens the viability of this important contractor and job creator.

This agreement from 1958 puts EllisDon at a significant disadvantage compared to foreign competitors who are neither bound nor obligated to follow through with these types of agreements, and it's this un-level and uneven playing field that my bill seeks to address. Simply put, we need to update the system before this ancient labour law chases jobs out of Ontario.

Speaker, I have commented in this House often about the need for a level playing field for business to succeed on their own merits, and I have said that it's time for government to stop picking and choosing winners and losers and to get away from government corporate welfare and subsidies. This bill furthers this goal and will help ensure a level playing field for all general contractors operating in Ontario, including, specifically, EllisDon. The way it stands right now, foreign competition from Spain and the United States has a significant advantage against our own Ontario-based company, and to me, Speaker, it simply makes no sense. Why would we, as legislators, favour foreign competitors against our own homegrown job creators?

The Ontario Labour Relations Board has set a deadline to comply with their ruling. This timeline gave the company just enough time to seek a legislative remedy to this unfair situation, and that is what we are trying to do with Bill 74.

1340

My message to Premier Wynne is this: Premier, you know and understand all of this. In fact, as you know, you have taken every side and played all angles in this debate. First, you supported my bill, and you stood here in the House and advocated on behalf of these necessary and important changes. In fact, on June 6, Premier, members of your caucus and members of your cabinet stood in this House and proudly voted in support of my bill, the exact, same bill we will vote on again tomorrow.

Then, Premier, you hedged your bet, and finally, at the request of a single union boss, you have flipped and flopped and, as I understand, are now going to oppose this bill and oppose Ontario jobs and Ontario job creators like EllisDon.

Premier Wynne, let me be crystal clear with you here this afternoon. Ontario law is on the verge of crippling this Ontario-based job creator. EllisDon is being forced

to abide by an unfair OLRB ruling that affects all their operations across Ontario and will ultimately cost good, well-paying Ontario jobs. The winners will be new and foreign companies that will be able to bid on contracts at a much cheaper rate. This will not only impact construction jobs, but will also impact head office jobs as well.

Speaker, I don't think I need to remind you or anyone in this House that EllisDon has a head office in London, where we are currently facing high unemployment. Not only do we need to create jobs and grow the economy in London and across southwestern Ontario, but we also need to keep and maintain the important jobs we currently have.

I've looked for support from London MPPs Armstrong and Sattler, but they seem willing to risk London jobs and the London success story for political gains here in Toronto. Quite clearly, it is—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex not to refer to members by their last names or surnames. In fact, he must refer to them by their riding names or, if they are ministers, by their minister's names. I'd ask him to observe that rule of the House.

The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's just extremely frustrating for me that two MPPs who represent London ridings are willing to risk London jobs—jobs in their own ridings—and put a London business success story at risk. It's quite frustrating.

Quite clearly, Speaker, it's in the best interests of the province to ensure that all businesses operate on a level playing field against new and foreign competitors. Bill 74 ensures that everyone in the industry is playing on a level playing field. With a fair environment to operate in, EllisDon will continue its operations in Ontario and will continue to create good jobs across the province, while also taking a leading and active role supporting our communities and, importantly, the city of London.

Speaker, it's important that the companies that provide good jobs for the hard-working men and women of Ontario are not crippled by unfair legislation and odd legal loopholes, but rather placed in an environment that is fair for all. This is something that I'm certain both the Liberals and NDP can agree with me on.

Deep down, I know that this Premier knows and agrees with all of this. But, of course, she is beholden to a single union leader and dances to the tune of the Working Families Coalition. That is why we saw the Premier swing from strongly supporting my bill to now, all of a sudden, opposing it. That is why, on September 9, the Premier called this bill levelling the playing field, as that is exactly what we are trying to accomplish with my bill, Bill 74.

That is also why the Premier included my bill in her hand-selected list of bills to move forward as part of the programming motion, but in just a couple of weeks has done a complete 180 and is now opposing Bill 74. That's why media outlets reported in early October that our Premier is "at the beck and call of unions." To quote from the Toronto Sun on October 2:

"A powerful union boss told Premier Kathleen Wynne to jump this week.

"She asked, 'How high?'—and meekly did just that."

What about the NDP, Speaker? While they speak of their political purity and the evils of political donations, of course we know that the NDP has taken \$500,000 in union donations this year alone. That's right, Mr. Speaker: The NDP and their leader, Andrea Horwath, have taken \$500,000 in donations from unions this year alone.

We have heard the NDP talking about political donations before. Of course, they never speak about taking half a million this year from unions and, ultimately, from Ontario workers. If this Legislature fails to pass this legislation, this Ontario company could be forced out of its core business, ultimately resulting in more job losses in Ontario and more unemployed people, adding to the 600,000 men and women currently unemployed in Ontario today.

That's 600,000 people who woke up this morning with no job to go to, no paycheque coming home to their bank account—but that's not all. Over the past decade, Ontario has lost 300,000 good jobs in the manufacturing sector, but at the same time we saw 300,000 more added to an already bloated government payroll. Soon, the only industry left in Ontario will be government, and we won't have to worry about the EllisDons of the world, at least not here in the province of Ontario.

If you look at the StatsCan data from the last year, the government sector has grown by 48,000 additional jobs, but we haven't seen a single net new job to the private sector. Fewer people are working outside the government, paying for more people working inside the government with higher wages, benefits and pensions than those who are paying the taxes. We must do everything we can to preserve jobs in the private sector and grow Ontario's economy.

We cannot allow for local companies to be placed at a decided disadvantage due to unfair legislation, and we cannot allow foreign and new companies to play by a completely different set of rules. Speaker, the only way forward is to move confidently and boldly in the direction you know is right. Ignoring the issues Ontario is facing is not solving the problem. With my bill here today, this House has an opportunity to solve a problem and help keep jobs here in Ontario.

Of course, that's exactly what the government is trying to do here today in opposing this bill. We now know that the Premier would like to take the easy way out and say that the Divisional Court ruling has achieved the same goal as this bill. The fact remains that the Divisional Court ruling is being appealed by two unions and will result in years of further legal wrangling, when my bill could quickly and decisively settle this issue once and for all.

Instead of taking our counsel from Pat Dillon and the Working Families Coalition, the approach of this House needs to be one that creates jobs and keeps Ontario businesses in Ontario. We must stand up for jobs and

protect the jobs and businesses that are in this great province. I believe that we can rebuild our economy for the 21st century and recreate a strong, growing and confident middle class.

Our big advantage is that Ontario has more of the greatest resource there is, and that's people. It is these people's knowledge, ideas and hard work that will take Ontario back to the top. At a time when Ontario is facing a major jobs crisis and stagnating economy, we must put forward solutions that will strengthen job creation and grow paycheques, not put both in jeopardy.

I did that in legislation named the Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario's Construction Industry Act. I was pleased when the bill received the support of the government, and am asking that those government members who proudly voted in favour of my legislation at second reading continue to stand firm and stand up on behalf of EllisDon and on behalf of Ontario companies and Ontario employees.

I'm pleased also to have unions representing 100,000 workers onside in supporting my bill too. The Carpenters' Union and LiUNA have both strongly endorsed this piece of legislation. We heard from the Carpenters' Union at the committee, and as a former director of training for LiUNA, I'm sure the NDP member from Essex is proud to expand on LiUNA's strong support of my bill, as well. Of course, we also know that the Working Families Coalition and Pat Dillon oppose my bill, and we know that the Premier has a propensity to jump through the hoops that they set for her.

Colleagues, this bill is a simple solution to a specific problem, and I am asking that all members join with me in standing up for good jobs here in the province of Ontario. Bill 74 helps keep jobs in Ontario, at home where they belong. I'm asking that all members of the House join with me and vote in favour of Bill 74.

1350

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join today's important debate. Before I begin, I want to mention that I will be sharing my time with the member from Timmins—James Bay.

Also, I'd like to welcome and introduce some guests who are in the gallery today. James St. John is the business manager of the Central Ontario Building Trades. Jim Hogarth is president of the Provincial Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario. Terry Snooks is the business manager of the United Association, Plumbers and Steamfitters, Local 46, and president of the Central Ontario Building Trades. I want to welcome them here today.

It's interesting times, Mr. Speaker, here at the provincial Legislature, indeed, when we see a bill crafted for the singular purpose of one entity, the corporation of EllisDon, a long-standing company in the province of Ontario that builds important infrastructure projects and that has benefited from the general economy of Ontario to the tune of roughly \$3 billion in yearly revenue. That's

quite an achievement, quite a success story. The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex acknowledged some of the recent awards and accolades EllisDon received. I do not doubt that they are warranted. There's no question that their products and their company are to be revered. I would, however, suggest that a large portion of that success is due to the work and labour of the workers who work for EllisDon.

Projects don't get built at the boardroom table. They get built with boots on the ground and hammers and pouring cement and tying steel and all the wonderful things that go with being a labourer, a construction worker in the province of Ontario and evidently under the company of EllisDon.

That's why I wonder if the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex is prepared, if this bill should go forward, to explain to the spouses of the workers who are currently under contract with EllisDon about how tomorrow morning they'll wake up, and all the benefits that they've worked for, all the benefits that they've negotiated for, the health and safety benefits, dental, medical benefits, their wage packages—I wonder if he's ready and willing to knock on a door and say, "Hi, I'm the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. I'd like your vote because I eliminated your bargaining rights and your family's bargaining rights when it came to EllisDon." I don't know if anyone in this House would be prepared to open up the door with that opening line, but I certainly expect, given the enthusiasm of the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, that that will be his shining achievement in this House.

It's interesting, because I don't particularly think that the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex actually crafted the bill. I think he's simply the messenger. I know that he is simply the messenger. We know that the bill rose to prominence in this House because of some very serious lobbying efforts on behalf of EllisDon. It rose, bubbled to the top of the priority list.

That's an interesting story in and of itself, Mr. Speaker. Recently, we had a programming motion here. You would know it quite well. It fast-tracked several bills lumped together through the process, things that, I think, were worthy for our debate in this House. But lumped inside of that programming motion, the omnibus motion, was Bill 74, the EllisDon motion, which eliminates a long-standing collective agreement bargained by various trades that dates back to 1958.

Of course, we know this has been talked about in this House before. There was an attempt to eliminate it prior under the Mike Harris government. Those attempts evidently failed, given the OLRB ruling.

The OLRB ruling, for those of you who aren't aware of it, didn't say that the collective agreement between EllisDon and those trades was nullified. It actually said that the agreement was valid and in good standing. What OLRB did say was that they understand that EllisDon is applying some serious pressure on this Legislature. They're on a full frontal assault in terms of their lobbying efforts. It said that we will give you a two-year estoppel

to seek legislative remedy through this House to exit that collective agreement. That's unheard of, and I think that's a deeper issue that we should be talking about, certainly more important in terms of the structure of the OLRB, that it can identify one singular company and give it reprieve under collective bargaining law, under labour law, in this province. How does that happen? If I woke up tomorrow morning as a construction worker, as a labourer, a member of LiUNA Local 625, and knew that my company was able to seek legislative reprieve and eliminate all of my rights and all of my benefits, I would be incredibly angry. That's what's going to happen tomorrow if the government decides to follow through with this bill.

They signaled their endorsement from the outset of this bill, so much so that it received prominence within the programming motion. You took their bill and said, "We want that one." Of all the bills that maybe we could have found tripartite acceptance on, you chose that bill to eliminate collective bargaining rights for the trades that are encompassed under the umbrella of the 1958 agreement. Evidently, the Liberal Party is friends of the trades only when it suits them, but when a massive corporation comes knocking, cheque in hand, to try to move the yardstick, to try to eliminate their binding rights, then the door swings wide open to power and privilege in this House. It's really—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would remind the member of standing order 23(i), which states the Speaker shall call to order any member who "makes allegations against another member," or "imputes false or unwavoured motives to another member." I would ask him to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'll withdraw, Mr. Speaker. I understand the point that you raised. I understand that that point has been made and called on by the Chair several times because it is a contentious issue, the timing, perhaps, the precedence, of this bill as well as the efforts made on behalf of the corporation to influence this bill. I understand it persuaded. I understand it's difficult, but it can't be ignored. It has to be discussed, because if we don't discuss that in this House, then there's free rein—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It is the responsibility of the Speaker to enforce the standing orders, and so you cannot bring that up again. I'm telling you that. If you do, I'm going to move on with debate.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I think my point has been made, and I appreciate you putting the emphasis on the point, Mr. Speaker.

The bill is called Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario's Construction Industry. The inference of the need for fairness is that we have foreign conglomerates coming in to Ontario to bid on Ontario-based projects. This isn't new. There are foreign companies that are—one of them, a major Spanish firm, is building the Windsor-Essex parkway, Acciona, Dragados and Fluor from Texas. These are multinationals that come in and bid. I would contest and argue that legislation at the federal level, not only the temporary foreign workers—if

that is indeed what the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex is concerned about, and if that is indeed what EllisDon is concerned about, that foreign companies will be able to come in and bring in foreign workers, then I would say his argument and his angst should be against the federal jurisdiction bringing in or allowing temporary foreign workers to flood our jurisdiction, to flood this province.

I would also say that the recently celebrated Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement between Canada and the European Union, one which the Liberal government has already signalled their intent to support wholeheartedly without seeing any of the context of the legislation, will indeed also open up the doors to massive foreign companies bidding on municipal projects and provincial projects, and absolutely destroy any benefit that EllisDon has.

1400

What we see here at the basis of this bill is strictly and solely an attack on those workers. I wish that the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex explains the intent of this bill. I hope to hear how he explains this to those workers, that through his own initiative he decided that it was important to alleviate EllisDon from their obligations under the collective agreement.

Here in the NDP, as New Democrats, yes, we support collective bargaining. We support the fundamental charter right of free association. I wonder, as Conservatives—I ask this question to my honourable colleague. You are the promoters of business, of free market and competition, yet many of the transactions that happen in the free market are binding, legal obligations between entities, between corporations. They sign real estate deals, sign purchasing agreements—the whole host of legally binding agreements that make our economy work. Yet when there is an agreement between a company and the worker, then it's open season on those. Those don't count as far as how the real economy works. I don't understand that. I don't understand that rationale. As much as I stand to defend the legally binding rights of one entity to bargain with another, to negotiate, whether it be in real estate or financial transactions or anything, you should also stand up for that legal right for unions to bargain their wages. It's pretty simple, it's fundamental and it's one that I think has led to the benefit of EllisDon over the last 58 years.

We had this bill come to committee for clause-by-clause just recently; it was last week. I sat in committee and watched as the Liberal government sat on its hands to not amend the bill. Obviously, they believe that the bill is good as it's crafted without an added comma or a subtracted sentence—anything. There was no amendment to the bill whatsoever, when we know in fact that a letter written to the Premier, and, I would imagine, written to all members of the assembly here, by James St. John, the business manager of the Central Ontario Building Trades, really showcased a massive pitfall that is encompassed in Bill 74 that brings in hundreds of other trades that will now be subject to Bill 74. Their collective bargaining

rights now will be affected or eliminated by the imposition of Bill 74. If you vote for this, if you support this bill, you are affecting hundreds of other trades that really have nothing to do with what the intent of the bill is.

I have to guess that given the Premier's about-face, given her flip-flop on this, initially saying that she was in support of it, that it needed immediate attention, that the remedy needed to happen in this House immediately—I would hope that she has signaled to her caucus and to the Liberal members that they should stand in their place and acknowledge that a mistake was made and to send this back to where it should be, which is in the courts, through the legally binding process. That's what I stand here today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic Party to do: to defend the rule of law. Indeed, we have the ability here to change the law; that's our job. We stand and change, amend laws and regulations. But laws that are currently available are more than adequate to deal with the singular company EllisDon and their issues with the trades that are affected. We don't need to intervene.

My question is, who is next? Which trade? Which corporation will be coming knocking on the government's door and saying, "We need remedy. We need help. We have to get out of this collective agreement. We have to get out of our long-standing collective agreement. We have to eliminate the bargaining rights for the trades that we've"—will it be the CAW? Will it be Chrysler or Ford or GM? Those are massive companies. Will they say, "Well, Liberals, you did it for EllisDon. We're just as important"? I would imagine that they would think they're more important than EllisDon, in terms of their contribution to our economy in the province. How long will it be before they come knocking and say, "We need relief from our collective agreement"? You'll say, "Well, we can't do that." But you have in the past. You've already signalled that you were willing to do that. What type of precedent does that set? It's unbelievable that this House, and our time here, is used to alleviate one singular company from its long-standing collective agreement.

This is a deal that was crafted between the Liberals and the Tories. There was an agreement made. "We will work together," they said. Kathleen Wynne, the Premier, and the Leader of the Opposition—I don't know what his riding is—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Niagara West—Glanbrook.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—Niagara West—Glanbrook—made a deal. They constructed a deal to prop each other's legislation up: "We'll support your legislation; you'll support ours." They propped each other's legislation up. Tit for tat, is what it is. They get—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: If you sense some—they don't like us talking about that. You can sense it. They don't like to be associated with the government, but indeed, in this fact, it's clear and evident. A Conservative bill got lumped in and found its way to the top of the legislative

agenda with the government, and it's made for one singular company, EllisDon, so important that it became the cornerstone of the programming motion.

The signals were everywhere that this was going to go sideways. We sounded the alarm quite early that this is not an area, not a jurisdiction, this House should be going into—

Interjection: Delving into.

Mr. Taras Natyshak:—delving into. Merci, monsieur. We signalled that this was setting a dangerous precedent.

In fact, the previous labour critic for the official opposition, the PCs, the member from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, expressed his deep, deep concern in a communiqué to the members of the PC caucus, I believe, through one of their caucus meetings, that the optics of this, where two parties come together for the singular motive of benefiting one company, send a really terrible signal out into the general public that they're not in it for the benefit of good public policy but for the benefit of a massive entity or corporation that has heavy lobbying levers to pull.

His communiqué to the PC Party was obviously met with some disdain, because he now sits in the back benches and has been stripped of his critic portfolio. And he's a good guy. I shouldn't mention that, but you know what? I have to say it, because it's part of the debate. For someone who stood up and said—in my workings with the member from Lanark, he's not the most progressive guy when it comes to labour law. But he even knew; he even could see the writing on the wall that this is going to look very bad. It was not going to look good when the general public—and the workers, who understand what the ramifications of Bill 74 are—finally figure out who the drivers of this bill are.

Mr. Speaker, suffice it to say that our party stands firmly on its principles in terms of protecting and maintaining bargaining rights—collective bargaining rights—under labour law in the province of Ontario for all workers who are encompassed under collective agreements. We will not intervene.

It's similar to when they joined in tandem again. It just hit me, Mr. Speaker: This happened before. I remember. It wasn't too long ago when they were working together. It was another bill. It was a couple of numbers off from 74; I believe it was 115, where teachers' collective bargaining rights were stripped away, might I say, for political purposes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Oh yes, you may.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Right? And that didn't end up too well either. That didn't end up well at all.

1410

Hon. James J. Bradley: What about Rae days?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: And what did happen with Rae days? I'll hit Rae days right on the head here. Bob Rae joined the Liberal Party at some point in the last 15 years, and he has been a good Liberal ever since, I think. He has been a good Liberal and has finally shown his colours.

But when it comes to the fact that bargaining rights in this province cannot be guaranteed, either under the Liberal Party or under the Conservative Party—we stand alone in protecting bargaining rights.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You hear me, Mr. Speaker. You're listening to me, so I'll speak directly to you. Speaker—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Could you stir us up a bit more?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, they're all stirred up.

Interjection: You've hit a nerve, Taras. You've hit a nerve.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Evidently I've hit a nerve, because what I've done is I've connected the dots here. I've connected the dots between the parties. They're not willing to do it alone; they need a partner in dismantling. That's what happened with Bill 115, and that's what happened with Bill 74. It's what is happening now. It has exposed, deeply, the Liberal Party's—

Interjection: True colours.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, true colours, but their ability to waffle when it benefits them, not necessarily to protect the rule of law. I stand here today very much in favour of the status quo, in favour of allowing the rule of law—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Madame, j'apprécie votre attention, mais excusez-moi que je parlais quand—excuse me, when I was speaking and you were interrupting.

Speaker, we stand alone as the only party in this House that is ready, willing and able to defend the historic collective bargaining rights not only of the trades that are encompassed under Bill 74 but all other trades that would certainly be frightened at the prospects of the fact that they could be next.

I urge the Liberal members to all do an about-face, as the Premier has on this. Stand in your places, vote against this regressive piece of legislation, and get on with the work of ensuring that the workers in this province are able to afford a decent living, that they're able to work in a safe environment, and that all workers in the province of Ontario benefit from labour law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, it's a privilege to join this particular debate, and I'll tell you why: The member for Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, in this bill, is trying to use the sledgehammer of the Legislature where, really, it's due process in the courts and the Ontario Labour Relations Board that is what's needed. This matter actually belongs in the Ontario Labour Relations Board or in Divisional Court.

The PC Party has always yielded to the temptation to make operational decisions, for either the public or the private sectors, on the floor of this Legislature, and that's the crux of what's at stake today. This bill attempts to circumvent due process to do exactly what the PC Party has been shouting out, through its policy white papers,

that it would implement, should it be in government, which is to gut the foundation of collective bargaining in favour of a tried-and-failed strategy of slash and burn, in a race to the economic bottom. I can't buy that.

Had the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex simply allowed due process to proceed, he would have realized that the bill really isn't needed. Let me just recap here.

The Divisional Court in Ontario has already made a ruling that quashed a decision of the Ontario Labour Relations Board. In other words, the company in question can continue to operate as it did prior to the matter being brought before the Ontario Labour Relations Board.

The member is aware that the Ministry of Labour lawyers have advised that this ruling achieves exactly the same outcome being sought with Bill 74. As a result, Speaker, we just no longer believe that this bill is needed, and we won't be supporting it. The urgency that was created by the Ontario Labour Relations Board decision has simply been removed by the courts.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'd ask the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex to withdraw that unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'll withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville has the floor.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the member should realize that he can't listen with his mouth open.

Interjection.

Mr. Bob Delaney: That's another one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think so, too. I would ask the member for Lambton to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, my colleagues know that when I'm in debate, I follow the rules of debate. Their chance is going to be in their rebuttal, and they are welcome to it. In the meantime, what I have to say is important, and it's significant. I urge them to just be quiet and listen.

The company in question had filed an application for a judicial review of this ruling. The unions that were involved in the litigation had also filed an application for a judicial review, but on different grounds. The decision of the Ontario Labour Relations Board was quashed, and the underlying grievances were dismissed. That way, the company can continue to operate as it has done for decades.

This brings to mind, as this involves the building trades, some of the investments in public infrastructure that our government has made not only in the last 10 years but will continue to make in the next three years. For example, in the last 10 years, our government has put \$85 billion into public infrastructure. Over the next three years, \$35 billion are planned.

I would wonder what effect this member's bill would have on those investments. So let's talk about it. In western Mississauga 10 years ago, we had endured eight long, lost years of PC Party, US-style, right-wing, do-nothing slash and burn. It has taken us the better part of a decade to catch up.

We desperately needed a new GO train station in western Mississauga. None had been built in 25 years. We got that GO train station, and we did it in the way that this government has always operated: The project was delivered ahead of schedule and under budget. It opened on September 4, 2007, and today commuters in the Lisgar neighbourhood of western Mississauga no longer have to clog those roads, like Derry Road, Aquitaine and Britannia, with west-to-east traffic in the morning to drive to either Meadowvale or Streetsville. We now have our own GO train station, and we have that because of these investments in public infrastructure.

Now, that sort of thing is what this bill really isn't about. It's not about getting public infrastructure built. It's about a race to the bottom. In fact, it's an attempt to take the interests of a private corporation and to superimpose it on the public agenda. That's wrong.

The correct thing for the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex to do is to respect the ruling of the courts, to explain to the Legislature that the intent of his bill has now been completely and thoroughly met and to withdraw the bill. That would end the entire thing.

Why would the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex want to enact legislation to do exactly—precisely—what due process in the courts has already done? Why are we even having this debate at all? We're having it because the North American right wing has found an opportunity to take a precedent-setting shot at organized labour. That's why government members see no need to go any further on a bill whose stated purpose has been eclipsed by the normal course of events in a properly constituted judicial proceeding.

Let's be a little bit more direct: I do not support a US-style, Tea Party-inspired, Conservative private member's bill whose only remaining purpose is to set a precedent for dismantling the equilibrium of collective bargaining in the Ontario building trades. That's what this is all about.

1420

My friend and colleague from Essex, whose hockey skills, by the way, could have helped his goaltender's cause, although not changed the outcome last Thursday against the firefighters—I should also say that he served and served well with the Labourers' International Union of North America, or LiUNA, as it is known.

Some unions, as the member has pointed out, do support the bill, and apparently LiUNA claims to support the bill, as do several others, but as I have been describing, that's no longer the point. The point is that the dispute resolution process in the building trades and in labour law has worked properly. We don't need Bill 74, and we don't need anything like it.

Now, this right-wing-inspired, kneejerk reflex to austerity needs a little bit of discussion during this

debate, so I'm going to use a few brief passages from the May/June 2013 issue of the US policy journal called *Foreign Affairs*. It's written by Mark Blyth, professor of international political economy at Brown University, and it's excerpted from a recent book that he wrote that's called *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea*.

What Blyth dissects is the underlying core of this bill, the US-style Tea Party attempt to make western democracy ungovernable through a massive transfer of wealth from just about everybody to the ranks of the very few wealthy. Speaker, with your indulgence, I'll read just a few brief passages. He says:

"The eurozone countries, the United Kingdom, and the Baltic states have volunteered as subjects in a grand experiment that aims to find out if it is possible for an economically stagnant country to cut its way to prosperity. Austerity—the deliberate deflation of domestic wages and prices through cuts to public spending—is designed to reduce a state's debts and deficits, increase its economic competitiveness, and restore what is vaguely referred to as 'business confidence.'"

That of course is the underlying theme of what the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex has been talking about.

"The last point is key: Advocates of austerity believe that slashing spending spurs private investment, since it signals that the government will neither be crowding out the market for investment with its own stimulus ... nor be adding to its debt burden."

Now, Speaker, Professor Blyth says, "Much of Europe has been pursuing austerity consistently for the past four years." Here's the key part: "The results of the experiment are now in, and they are equally consistent: Austerity doesn't work. Most of the economies on the periphery of the eurozone have been in free fall since 2009, and in the fourth quarter of 2012, the eurozone as a whole contracted for the first time ever. Portugal's economy shrank by 1.8%, Italy's fell by 0.9%, and even the supposed powerhouse of the region, Germany, saw its economy contract by 0.6%. The United Kingdom, despite not being in the eurozone, only barely escaped having the developed world's first-ever triple-dip recession."

This is the agenda that the PC Party advocates to bring into the province of Ontario, and it's crazy.

Says Professor Blyth, "The only surprise is that any of this should come as a surprise. After all, the International Monetary Fund warned in July 2012 that simultaneous cuts to state spending across interlinked economies—exactly what they're advocating—"during a recession when interest rates were already low would inevitably damage the prospects for growth."

He goes on. He points out that while the PC Party's ideas are very seductive due to their simplicity, in practice they have left every state that has tried them with more debt and not less, less prosperity and not more.

One of the key aspects of that is the steady erosion of the equilibrium and the framework for organized labour. That's what this bill really intends to do. It doesn't have a purpose anymore. It's been eclipsed entirely by the courts.

I think I have made this point: We will not be supporting Bill 74. Its purpose has already been achieved. The correct thing for the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex to do is to simply acknowledge that the point of his bill has already been achieved and simply withdraw the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Speaker. It's been interesting to listen to some of the comments, certainly from the other side of the House, on this. I think that if anyone has actually been actively paying attention to this particular bill within the context of the omnibus bill, people would be duly confused as to what the Liberals are thinking, if they are thinking at all. They came to this House, they sat down with Monty Hall from *Let's Make a Deal*, and they said, "Listen, we want 74 embedded in this omnibus bill with all of those other things that we debated pre-prorogation and post-prorogation."

We have had these debates going on in this House—these very simple, straightforward bills that may actually make a difference once we get them to committee—and yet they embedded 74 in. It was hinging on course-correcting. I understand, at least, where the PC caucus was coming from on this issue. They wanted to be seen as getting something done. So they brought 74 to the table and made a deal with the Liberals. Now, I don't think that the Liberals fully understood how much this was going to blow up in their faces. They certainly—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Don't paint everybody with the same brush, Catherine.

Ms. Catherine Fife: No, no. Truly, truly, I understand where you're coming from.

But it blew up. It blew up because we remembered that other piece of legislation, Bill 115, which undermined collective bargaining rights in the province of Ontario like no other piece of legislation has ever done. It's a very personal piece of legislation for me, because it played out in the Kitchener–Waterloo by-election, and it played itself out in a very negative way, because that piece of legislation came into this House, again, with the support of the PC caucus. I understand where they were coming from on that. It undermined, like no other piece of legislation, the rights of all education workers in the province of Ontario. I know that they want to forget that, and I know that we will not let them forget that. I hope that the people who are in this House today never forget that collective bargaining rights were squashed, were undermined, by that piece of legislation. Not unlike Bill 74, when it came to this House it was like a wake-up call. It was like people woke up again. It was a good day, in many respects.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville, it's a little alarming that you forget that you voted to send Bill 74 to committee. When it got to committee, we sat in that committee and the good people from across the province came into the room and they said, "Listen, this is why this is wrong."

The Carpenters' Union stands out for me. It stands out because when the president of the Carpenters' Union for the province of Ontario said, "I know it's uncomfortable, and it's a little strange for us to be coming here before this esteemed committee"—he might not have said "esteemed"; I might have put that part in. But he said, in front of this committee, and supporting a piece of legislation that undermines the collective bargaining rights of workers, "You don't understand. EllisDon is important." And we reminded him, in that committee session, that the people of this province are important; the history of bargaining—fair and open, transparent bargaining—is important in the province of Ontario. I think we made that point in that committee session.

But you know what? It was even more surprising—and the member from Mississauga—Streetsville dismisses and hopes that we'll forget what the Liberals have done on this piece, like a Ping-Pong game with collective bargaining rights. He hopes that we forget that in that session we found out that even the Carpenters' Union suggested amendments. Yet the esteemed member from Windsor-Essex has pointed out that even the Liberals didn't introduce clause-by-clause. You could have made changes. You could have changed the date on the legislation, which would have undone a lot of the damage, just leaving a special deal for EllisDon. That's why that piece of legislation came here. Yet you chose not to.

Now we hear today that you won't be supporting this piece of legislation, even though you had this Let's Make a Deal moment with the PC caucus, and even though in that omnibus bill there are some good pieces of legislation. So I think the people in the province of Ontario are looking and they're saying, "What is going on in this place? Do you support the workers in the province of Ontario, or do you not?" And yet there are so many reasons to actually dig down a little deeper, even when you look at issues the Liberal government should be paying attention to, like worker safety, for instance.

A young man in my riding of Kitchener–Waterloo fell to his death just before Oktoberfest because this government has chosen to leave basic worker safety off the agenda. It is not a priority. Even though Tony Dean made a recommendation way back in 2010 to make fall prevention a priority in all workplaces, 10 people have fallen to their death in the province of Ontario since June 2013. Somehow that trumps the health and the welfare of the people who are building the infrastructure in this province. Bill 74—

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Point of order.

1430

Ms. Catherine Fife: Oh, good, we've got someone saying something.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): On a point of order, the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I request the member opposite, under section 23, to speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's a valid point of order that members must speak to the bill at

hand. I return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo and remind her to bring her remarks back to Bill 74.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you. I think that Bill 74, in the context of it being a priority for the people of this province and within the context of worker safety, actually is very relevant. So I understand, and I'll respect the Speaker because it's a delicate point of order, but I wish to tell you that, when I knock on doors in Kitchener–Waterloo or when members knock on doors in Hamilton or members knock on doors in Windsor-Essex, people are not asking, "What are you going to do about EllisDon? That poor EllisDon." Honestly, within the context of the priorities of this place, you dare to stand up and question a point of privilege when I'm talking about the core business of this province, which is worker safety?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would remind the member for Kitchener–Waterloo to refer her remarks to the Speaker, through the Chair, as is also the custom of this place. I would remind her again to talk about Bill 74, the bill that is before the House.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Let's review everything that's wrong with Bill 74. Let's talk about how, in recent days, building trades have argued two new points that strengthen the case against Bill 74. The wording of Bill 74 also undermines hundreds of existing collective agreements outside of even the Toronto area construction trades, which are signed with companies before 1978 and are not part of the province-wide agreements, not the big 11, which also includes, obviously, EllisDon. If EllisDon truly believes it is at a competitive disadvantage because of the 2012 OLRB decision, since overturned by the Superior Court, it can seek to negotiate terms other than those in the master agreement with individual unions such as IBEW and sheet metal workers. If the parties can't agree to amended terms, EllisDon can go to arbitration to settle matters. This is a key piece.

After all the delegations came to committee that day, and we were obviously talking about Bill 74, because that was before the House, I asked the lawyer for EllisDon—I just went up to him, and I said, "You've got a good company. EllisDon is a strong employer in the province of Ontario, and yet for some reason, you don't want to go through these channels," the channels that all of us have to go through as Ontarians. If we have a dispute, there is a legal course of action that we have to take, because, first of all, many of us have fought for those rights to pursue legal action, as have the unions, as have the companies. I asked the lawyer, "Is it worth it for you? Does it have to be so black and so white? Is there no way for you to mediate through this with the sheet metal workers, for instance?" The answer was just a flat-out no, because they have invested a lot of time. They have invested a lot of energy in going down this route.

In this party we firmly believe that collective agreements should not be negotiated on the floor of this Legislature, because those collective bargaining rights have been fought for for centuries—for decades. Sometimes it feels like centuries, right? This is an important piece of this puzzle. So we now see that the Liberal Party has

decided that they're not going to be part of this conversation anymore. Thankfully, there will be no panel. They're not going to strike another panel, another round table, another working table.

Miss Monique Taylor: Consultations.

Ms. Catherine Fife: We don't need to consult on it anymore.

Now they agree fully that, because the legal system is now siding with whatever they wanted in the first place, and we have one PC member here on this side of the House—thanks for sticking around—they still firmly believe that this special deal should be made, and they are obviously disappointed with the way things have fallen out.

I think I'm going to leave my points there, because where we are with Bill 74 is that it has been an interesting learning experience, I think, for all of us. Maybe even the Liberal Party has learned that you can't butter your toast on both sides and that if you are lost, maybe to be a little more cautious in the route that you take as a party.

But remember this: This party is always going to side with workers, with the economy, with creating new jobs. We are going to be bringing forward the priorities of people, which we have been consistently doing for the last two years, throughout the budget process. Yes, we read budgets, and then we try to make them stronger. We support legislation. We try to get it to committee. We try to make it better. People in this province, quite honestly, expect that of us. They expect us to show up and do the work. By doing so, they certainly are looking at us differently, which is encouraging. I think, actually, that the by-election results have shown that, because when we knock on a door, we can say, "We are fighting for you and for your family, and for those small and medium-sized businesses. We want to see the economy strengthen and grow, so that we can support those core values that we all have around education and around health care."

I think that by trying to play this sort of game, by throwing Bill 74 into an omnibus bill which, quite honestly, contains some good things, we've all learned a lesson. For us, it's just to be ever vigilant, to watch every step that you take and to make sure that we're really clear on what the PCs' motivation is. They genuinely sometimes just surprise us.

So here we are today, and I'm happy to hear that perhaps Bill 74 will go nowhere, because it never should have been before the House, we never should have had to debate it, and we are going to stay on the right side of this issue, which is on the left.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm delighted to be able to stand in the House today and speak to this bill. I believe it's called the Fairness and Competitiveness in Ontario's Construction Industry Act, also known as the EllisDon bill, or more commonly known, perhaps, as the attempt by a few well-paid lobbyists to weasel out of a fairly bargained collective agreement act, updated in 2013.

Look, I've said it before in this House, and I'll say it again: I have absolutely nothing against EllisDon. I think they're a fabulous company. They do fantastic work with a superb workforce, many of whom are unionized. They do great work, and they have for years. I know they do it down in my part of the province, as well as everywhere else. And it's the employees—the workers—who, through their sweat and their labour, their skills and their training, are helping to build a better Ontario. We should be supporting other companies who do the same.

Their buildings don't fall down. No one is questioning them for cutting corners or using shoddy construction techniques. If you want to know what happens when you do that, I can remind you about what's happening on the Herb Gray Parkway in my part of the country, where we have all of these girders. You've heard me talk about the girders many times in the House, and the whole process that went into that. You put out a contract and you say, "As part of this multi-billion dollar huge infrastructure project, we're going to need some girders built, so we want you to build them." Companies bid, and they're not supposed to start construction until they are CSA-approved. Eight or nine months in, they're still not CSA-approved, they don't have an engineer on site, their welders aren't certified up to the standard they should be; and now we have all kinds of experts looking at what has gone on and questioning whether or not those girders should be hauled out of there.

1440

Hon. James J. Bradley: Is this Bill 74?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes, it's part of the bill, because we're talking about infrastructure, we're talking about construction in Ontario, and we're talking about qualified companies that do the work.

I think "perhaps" is the key word in that report. When they were asked, "Can these girders be fixed? Can we bring them back up to standard?", the expert panel unanimously said, "Perhaps." "Perhaps" isn't being very reassuring, especially not to the people in Windsor, LaSalle, Tecumseh and Essex county.

EllisDon has been in business in this province for more than 60 years. They have annual revenues of more than \$3 billion. Right now, they have \$11 billion in construction projects under way. They have international experience. They build, they construct, in more than 15 countries—amazing. What a great success story. They're Canada's largest health care builder. They're involved in more than 20 public-private partnerships. What a great company. So when you start talking about tearing up their contract and stripping away some collective bargaining rights—why? Why do they need this Legislature to do something that's before the courts? There's a judicial process under way. If it isn't in the courts, it's the Ontario Labour Relations Board. That's where this belongs, Speaker; not here. This has to be rejected at this level.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Pursuant to the order of the House dated Thursday, October 3, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. McNaughton has moved third reading of Bill 74, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 to alter bargaining rights conferred by pre-1980 working agreements in the construction industry.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received from the chief government whip a notice of deferral, requesting that the vote be deferred until the time of deferred votes tomorrow morning, Tuesday, October 29, 2013.

Third reading vote deferred.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 24, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act / Projet de loi 105, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'impôt-santé des employeurs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a great opportunity today to speak to Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. The short title of the act is the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013. Again, I am privileged to speak on behalf of the people of Samia-Lambton and the many small business owners who do business there and with whom I meet on a regular basis.

I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all the members who were able to attend the Canadian Natural Gas Vehicle Alliance reception in room 230 over the noon hour. I've had the opportunity to work with this group recently in the development of my bill, Bill 97, the Natural Gas Superhighway Act. Bill 97, I like to say, was unanimously supported by the members of this Legislature—I'll take a moment just to promote myself a bit.

During the last constituency week, I actually had the opportunity to visit a first-of-its-kind ship-through conversion facility, another small business that was opened, actually, in Windsor West by a very forward-looking company, Westport Innovations. This shop is a perfect example of the sort of advanced manufacturing and value-added production that Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party have been championing for the province, because what Ontario workers and employers need is a government that believes in them and knows that our ability to build and sell innovative products is as good as anyone's.

This legislation, Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act, exemplifies exactly what is

wrong with this government and their approach to governing. It should be noted that it was the PC government of the day that first introduced the employer health act exemption as a way to assist small businesses in this province by reducing their overall tax burden. This act amends that to increase the amount that can be exempted from \$400,000 to \$450,000.

This is not an insignificant amount for some small businesses, and as such, I believe this act should be sent to committee, hopefully to see if some additional improvements can be made. However, it's disappointing that this government again failed to find it within themselves to send a meaningful signal to businesses in Ontario. Time and again over the last decade, they have been unwilling to go so far as to take the decisive action needed to provide real tax relief to Ontario business. This is more tinkering around the edges by this government, and will not do enough to solve the jobs crisis facing this province. This government has missed the mark.

This legislation comes at a time when Ontario's small businesses are struggling with:

- skyrocketing hydro rates, which have doubled under this government, the next rate increase to occur on November 1;

- Ontario's industrial electricity rates are now the second-highest in North America;

- the global adjustment charge, which seems to cover the cost of whatever the government wants to throw in, including the \$1-billion-plus cost of the cancelled Mississauga and Oakville power plants, is at a record high;

- increases to WSIB premiums, which are eating into the razor-thin profit margins of small business owners;

- the new College of Trades tax, which targets independent contractors; and

- outdated apprenticeship ratios, limiting the skilled trades' ability to create jobs.

In his introductory speech, the Minister of Finance noted that this act was part of the government's "job creation plan." That may be news to the Premier, who has shown no evidence of a job creation plan during her nine months as Premier, and who just recently challenged the agri-food industry to create a plan for her. She couldn't do it, so she's asked the agri-food industry to do it for her. In the most recent edition of Today's Farmer, rather than talking about Bill 105 and its place in the secret Liberal job creation plan, the Premier instead asked the agri-food industry, many of whom are small business owners themselves, to come up with 120,000 jobs for her.

To underline the point I made earlier that this government has missed the mark with Bill 105 and its small increase to the employer health tax exemption, I want to read to you, and into the record, a letter from Kevin Marriott, a farmer, and also mayor of the township of Enniskillen, who wrote in response to the Premier's challenge to the Ontario Farmer:

"Dear editor:

"I read with some confusion and disbelief Premier Wynne's letter to the editor on October 22, 'The Chal-

lence to Double Our Growth Rate in Agriculture,' in which she challenged 'Ontario's agri-food industry to double its growth rate and create more than 120,000 new jobs by 2020.'

"I'm glad to hear that the Premier will be meeting to identify what the government can do... There are many changes the government will need to make to bring Ontario back to being competitive in areas that will allow expansion of small business or any type of manufacturing, including food processing. Ontario has been losing manufacturing jobs; Wynne's talk of expansion will be impossible without these changes. Let's start by eliminating just some of the red tape that has become paramount in this province that discourages growth in manufacturing" and agriculture. "The layers of government bureaucracy that impede this, for example, are stringent environment and labour laws, along with the high cost of doing business because of considerations such as workmen's compensation and the highest electricity rates of any province in Canada (or, put another way, the second-highest in North America due in part to the Green Energy Act of 2009).

"If the agriculture sector had even a percentage of the subsidy dollars that the Green Energy Act has received in the past four years (in the billions and higher every day), we may have already been on our way to this lofty goal that the Premier has set out for 2020. It is also sad that most of these subsidies have been to foreign companies such as NextEra. The promise of 50,000 jobs was an exaggeration and, furthermore, the jobs created are, at best, temporary jobs. Worse yet is the recent announcement to pay some of the companies not to produce electricity after giving the generous subsidies! And it gets worse: Hydroelectric at Niagara Falls (the greenest of all electricity through history) is actually bypassing water because we do not need the electricity due to this exodus of manufacturing from Ontario. A recent conversation with some Michigan politicians told me, 'Whatever you are doing in Ontario, keep it up, as we are experiencing an influx of jobs from your jurisdiction.'

"If Ontario is adamantly committed to forging ahead with this waste of taxpayer dollars, (the lower-level tier) municipal governments should at least be able to have democratic powers reinstated, so as to have the right to refuse industrial wind turbines when some constituents are saying, 'No, we don't want them.' The provincial government should respect that not all municipalities want to be 'willing hosts.'"

This is signed by Kevin Marriott, who is a delegate, district 3, Grain Farmers of Ontario, and also the mayor of the township of Enniskillen.

1450

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Marriott is a small business owner himself, yet he doesn't mention the employer health tax exemption as one of the primary concerns for his business's success. I would bet that pretty much every small business owner, just like Mr. Marriott, would rather see the government address things like the out-of-control energy rates, climbing WSIB premiums and the thicket of

government red tape that they must deal with as their top priority.

Bill 105 and its increase in the employer health tax exemption rate from \$400,000 to \$450,000 just doesn't create confidence in the small business owners that this Liberal government grasps how difficult things are for small business or that they have any idea how to make things better.

We on this side of the House fully understand that what Ontario and small business need right now is for the province to have an economic plan that will stimulate investment and job growth. The Ontario PC Party has one; we have been laying it out in our 14 Paths to Prosperity white papers. There are about 200 ideas in those documents that we have offered to the Premier and her government. As my colleague, the venerable member from Nipissing and opposition critic of finance said in this House, "The solutions to Ontario's problems aren't hard to figure out; they're just not easy to do. Ontario needs a government that has a plan to reduce spending and create jobs, and the courage to implement it."

Bill 105 will require quite a bit of work to get it to a place where Ontario's small business can garner some benefit from it. It's my hope that after it's sent to committee—where we can hear from delegations, we can hear from other members from all three parties—we can make opportunities for suggestions to improve the bill, maybe make some deletions that people might feel on reflection aren't necessary, that would be important to do—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Smile for the cameras.

Mr. Robert Bailey: As the honourable member, the Minister of the Environment, tells me there are cameras here in the House, and I know that he's been here for so many years, that he has had the opportunity to appear before those cameras at many times, and always does a great job—

Interjection: Some good days, some bad.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Some good days, some bad. We all have those, right?

Anyway, Bill 105, as I say, is a step in the right direction. We don't feel that it has gone far enough. We really look forward to the bill getting to committee. We can try and make those improvements, Mr. Speaker, where all members can bring concerns to their constituents and small business people in their riding. They can bring them there and they can try and make those kinds of improvements.

Also, it's an important part of the debate, to hear from all the members from the different ridings across Ontario, and it's a pleasure for me to have had the opportunity to stand today. I hope that by having the bill referred to committee, we can see those improvements made in a forthwith and in a meaningful manner. I look forward to the rest of the debate today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm pleased to take two minutes to talk about this bill. I support small business. I do think

the government could be doing more to support small business people. I want to give you an example. I received a letter from a constituent, who speaks on behalf of her friend Pierre Paquette. He's a hard-working fellow. He owns his own family business; it's a family construction business. He's 55 years old and he's healthy, except he needs shoulder surgery. He was supposed to get the surgery done on the 18th in Windsor at Hôtel-Dieu hospital, but two weeks ago, he got a call from the hospital saying his surgery was cancelled due to a lack of funding.

So here's a guy, a small business man, who schedules surgery when his business is slow—it gives him time to recuperate—and he even took out extended health care benefits to provide himself with rehab post-surgery, and they cancelled his surgery.

Now, here's the problem: He's got a wife; he's got two sons in university. If he doesn't have his surgery soon, his entire livelihood will be threatened. He was doing everything he could within the system, as a small business man working within Ontario's small business rules and within the health care system.

I guess the problem is there's not enough money to pay for these surgeries in hospitals. If we can't give it to him in Windsor—I mean, there should be a system whereby he can either go to London or Toronto, or even to Detroit, to get it done, if it's going to keep his surgery going.

A small business man: He needs all the help he can get from this government. I certainly hope that we can do what we can, through talking about it during the bill on small business, to bring attention to his situation and, hopefully, Pierre Paquette can get the help that he needs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I've listened with interest to the discussion here this afternoon. I just want to say, from my perspective, that we have now had somewhere in the neighbourhood of nine hours and 40 minutes of debate on this particular bill. It's important that we move forward with getting this to committee so we can actually do what the bill is designed to do, which is to help move Ontario's economy forward. I call on all members to join with us to vote on this bill, get it to committee and keep moving our province forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to respond to the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I do listen, as much as possible, to a person that—his actions speak louder than words; I should put it that way. He has been the sponsor of and successfully introduced three bills which are now law—I think the members of the House will appreciate his understanding of issues—Bill 8, which is the one call when digging for pipelines and the danger there to the public; the blue ribbon highway, Bill 97, that's before us; and the discussions ongoing with the tax credit for surplus food. I commend the member for Sarnia-Lambton on the work.

In his remarks today, he referred to the 14 papers that Tim Hudak and our caucus have out there right now on Pathways to Prosperity. It's worth the viewers of Ontario having a look at them. It is a new plan, but it's a plan on the right track. I can only assure you that the member made that a connection to the Bill 105 discussion about a plan poorly thought through.

This whole employer health tax—if you listen to the CFIB, Canadian Federation of Independent Business, they would tell you that immediately the first thing that comes to mind is the onerous amount of red tape. That's the first thing in almost all of their surveys.

These are small business people telling you, "What is our biggest headache?" Their biggest headache is Kathleen Wynne's—pardon me—the Premier's approach to most things, which is raising more tax and more revenues, so they can buy more gas plants or cancel nuclear plants in the riding of Durham.

I think that the red tape issue—but the 14 papers have some really excellent suggestions to get the economy going. This is what we need. I look around at the young people of Ontario with no future, or at least a very dim future, and I think that these papers provide innovative approaches to solutions that we have before us. This Bill 105, if you look through it, does really virtually nothing. It is about a \$900 tax break, which is what it is for a company. What they could do is eliminate some of the red tape, and it would cost you nothing.

The member from Sarnia-Lambton did a great job.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to address this bill this afternoon. I understand from my colleagues that there is an interest in having debate here, taking this matter to committee, where the bill can be examined, where we can actually see if there are improvements that can be put in place.

Mr. Speaker, as you're well aware and as the member from Sarnia was saying, there are many small businesses in this province facing a very difficult time. In my riding I have, apparently, the highest percentage of self-employed people in the province, who are operating and running small consulting businesses, small retailing operations. Efforts to assist them, efforts to help them build the economy of this province, are critical. Not everyone is going to work for Vale Inco; not everyone is going to work for US Steel; not everyone is going to work for Manulife. There are literally tens of thousands of small businesses that allow people to make their way within this very huge, very complex economy. Changing regulations so that it is easier for them, in the volatile environment that they operate in, to survive and thrive is a useful thing. We've had this debate within our own caucus. We want this bill to go forward to committee. We want the opportunity to hear from the public. We want to identify their challenges, and we want the opportunity to work through a bill that truly addresses their concerns.

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This is not the biggest step we are ever going to see. In fact, my colleague the MPP from Parkdale–High Park may refer to it as a baby step; I will not take the words out of her mouth, or try to jam some in, alternatively, but nonetheless, worth the debate here and worth going to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have for questions and comments, and I return to the member from Sarnia–Lambton for his reply.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It was a pleasure to listen to the comments from the members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Vaughan, Durham and Toronto–Danforth. As 90% of the jobs in Ontario are created by small business, it's certainly expedient that we do everything we can do to improve the sector for small business. They are the backbone of the economy.

My dad ran a small business many years ago. I know how important that was to him and our family, and I know there are many people out there today who also—my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; I know he comes out of a small family business. They have 60-some employees; in a small town, that's a major employer. I know a number of other individuals who are in our caucus—and, I'm sure, all caucuses—are represented either in their own ridings or maybe come out of small businesses that their families did in their past as well. I think that there's a great opportunity for us to bring those memories, those experiences in life, here to try to improve things for others.

I would encourage every one of the viewers out there in television land who are tuned in to the Legislature today to go to our website, the Ontario PC Party, or the individual members who represent you. Take a look at our Paths to Prosperity, the 14 papers that have been released to date. There are a number of ideas that are not necessarily party policy yet for our election platform, but they are ideas or discussion papers. Those are created from thousands of meetings across the province, where people have had input either through email or through one-on-one meetings with members or with our leader. People have brought those ideas and those discussions to the table.

Again, I look forward to the rest of the debate this afternoon as we debate Bill 105, the employer health tax. As the member from Durham said, initially this was a PC caucus idea from years ago when the Conservatives were in power, so anything we can do to encourage small business in this province I am all for.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a point of order. I'm reading today's Orders and Notices paper, and I notice that I have two order paper questions that are overdue. I see that the Minister of the Environment is here, and both of them are directed at him. I tabled them six months ago. I am a very patient person, but I believe they are now over a month

and a half old. They relate to statistics around the Drive Clean program in Leeds–Grenville, and also a closed Athens village landfill site.

Perhaps the minister, since he's here, would like to give me a verbal answer in the House, since we are now looking at a notice that is well over a month and a half late. With the House's indulgence, perhaps the minister would like to address those.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We do find that you have a valid point of order. I must say to the minister I want to remind you that you are required, under standing order 99(d), to file a response within 24 sessional days. Your response is now overdue, and I would ask that you give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Certainly I would say that it will be at the very earliest opportunity. I know that the Conservative Party is out to destroy the Drive Clean program, which was brought in by Norm Sterling, one of my favourite Conservatives of all time, but we will try—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I am satisfied with your answer—your explanation. That concludes the point of order.

Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Holy smokes, Speaker. I'm so glad to stand up this afternoon. I think I was supposed to stand up a couple of times today and speak to this bill. I'm very pleased to speak to Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013, and I want to thank the current speakers and acknowledge their insight and comments on this bill as well.

This bill is very important for my riding of London–Fanshawe especially, because in my riding we have experienced and encountered more than our fair share of job losses, plant closures and unfair business practices. For my riding it is vital that we get this bill right, and unfortunately there are a number of larger concerns with this bill that we need to address.

Currently, there's an exemption for paying employer health tax on the first \$400,000 in an employer's payroll. This applies to a business with one employee and to the Royal Bank. The NDP has long argued that while the exemption is appropriate for small companies, there is no reason to have the first \$400,000 in a large employer's payroll exempt from the EHT. This is why the NDP called for companies with \$5 million in payroll or more to no longer be eligible for the exemption, and we are pleased that the government recognizes the importance of this element. We are also pleased to see that the government has chosen to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for the period from the 2014 to the 2018 calendar years.

Starting in 2019, the exemption amount is adjusted for inflation every five years. This will more than wipe out the increased revenue that we had hoped to gain by removing the exemption for larger companies.

The government has also moved to close loopholes that allowed employers to segment their workforce to show smaller payrolls. Not allowing artificial segmenta-

tion—and I hope Hansard gets that right—of payrolls is especially important as it relates to the collection and the enforcement of tax dollars. The artificial segmenting of the workforce is a major concern, and we have already seen issues with RBC contriving their Canadian workforce numbers as recently as this past year. While RBC, Canada's largest bank, was posting record profits, the company came under intense public scrutiny because of its plan to axe jobs currently held by Canadian RBC employees in favour of foreign temporary workers.

In this instance, RBC employees who were given termination notice claimed they were required to train the foreign workers who would eventually be taking their jobs. All the while, RBC continued to state that their actions met the criteria set out through legislation. Finally, RBC's top executives apologized to the workers who were affected by the bank's outsourcing arrangement with the foreign company, saying RBC should have been more sensitive and helpful to them.

While we understand that the actions taken by RBC are related to the federal foreign worker program, it is clear that we can no longer sit back and hope that companies like RBC will simply do the right thing, nor can we continue to empower RBC as a lone company with our legislated tax loopholes. The government must be sure it has closed off all possible ways of segmenting the workforce for payroll reporting purposes, which has clearly been a problem in the past.

The employer health tax, or the EHT, is an exemption on the first \$400,000 of payroll, which applies to all employers, large or small. Employers pay the EHT as a percentage of their payrolls. While this exemption is arguably legitimate for smaller businesses, it makes no sense to exempt larger employers with thousands of employees from paying the tax on their first \$400,000 in payroll. The new payroll exemption threshold will be set at \$5 million, and at that threshold level we are likely looking at continuing the exemption for all employers with 100 or fewer employees. It's time for this government to correct their blatant favouritism towards large companies and begin putting forward ideas that make sense for small businesses.

Small businesses are the drivers of our economy, and for ridings like mine in London-Fanshawe, where the manufacturing sector has been all but decimated, we are looking to small and medium-sized businesses to help lead the revitalization of our city.

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The NDP sees the larger issues associated with this bill, that there are a range of other tax loopholes that could be changed to generally give smaller businesses the help they need to succeed, yet this government continues to look towards Ontario taxpayers as the answer to their economic failures.

The Liberals claim that the provincial government needs to hit household budgets with new taxes to raise the \$34 billion for transit infrastructure by 2031. At the same time, the Liberal government has committed to a series of new corporate tax loopholes and giveaways to

Ontario's largest corporations and highest-income earners that will cost the Ontario treasury more than \$35 billion by the same date, 2031.

Why is it that this government is willing to open a \$1-billion corporate tax loophole that will give Ontario's largest tax corporations an HST rebate on expenses like expensive restaurants, meals and box seats? The priorities coming from this government are all wrong.

There are thousands of seniors in this province who can't afford to continue to supplement the dining and entertainment costs for larger companies, yet when my colleague from Algoma-Manitoulin introduced a motion that would give Ontario families a rebate on their home heating costs, this government used their powers to make sure this bill didn't move forward on to third reading and finally voted against it. Taking the HST off home heating would have saved a family with two children about \$100 a year, but this government refuses to see hard-working Ontarians as anything more than their own ATM.

Over the last decade, the Liberals have brought in a series of measures that hit household budgets. The HST and the regressive health tax now take \$6.7 billion out of household budgets every year. Meanwhile, the Liberals continue to offer never-ending tax loopholes and giveaways that now cost our treasury more than \$7 billion a year.

Andrea Horwath and the NDP believe this bill can and must be fairer to the small and medium-sized businesses that need our help. By making the delayed HST tax credit permanently delayed, we could net our treasury more than \$1.3 billion, and by increasing corporate tax compliance rather than allowing companies to shift profits and losses from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, even Donald Drummond estimated that this measure would bring in \$50 million in its first year and another \$200 million by 2017.

Lastly, by eliminating the employer health tax exemption on the first \$400,000 in payroll for all companies with payrolls over \$5 million, we would add another \$90 million to the treasury.

These straightforward and balanced measures could allow for Ontario to truly help small businesses in a real way. The real issue is whether or not the government will recognize that prioritizing larger companies is not the way forward for Ontario.

My NDP colleagues and I have put forward very simple, yet financially sound ideas to help this bill reach its intended goal. We hope to be able to count on the support of other members opposite and those across the way in the Legislature to improve our supports to small business as key players in driving our economy.

Speaker, I hope this bill has the approval of all members in this House to pass to committee because we did make some very good suggestions as to how we can improve this bill, because we know that when we have a healthy business community, we have a healthy economic environment. When our local small businesses don't thrive, we'll see that shops close up their doors, their windows are boarded up and we end up having vacant

properties. That's not a healthy neighbourhood for any city or province across the country.

I hope that the Conservatives and the Liberals see fit that we pass this bill into committee so that we can truly make improvements and adjust this bill, as needed, to actually firmly support small businesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I appreciated hearing the comments from the previous speaker. I think she did a very good job of outlining her concerns and what should happen with this bill. I think we've had adequate debate at this point on Bill 105, and certainly I and I think other members from this side would like to see it proceed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's nice to hear the member from London-Fanshawe's remarks. Again, I'm going to just urge people, yes, let's get this bill to committee. We want to have it at committee so we can improve this bill. We think there are lots of improvements that can be made to it. We've already outlined what we think are some of our concerns with it, with our 14 white papers, which we think would go a long way to increasing opportunities in the small business and larger business sectors, as far as that goes in the province of Ontario.

A week ago, I think it was, the member from Thornhill pointed out that what this tax cut will really amount to is about \$900. I think at the end of the day, it may be even less than that. He said it would hardly be enough to take your work team out to dinner for Christmas, or if you took them out for a Christmas dinner, it would hardly pay for that. Anyway, I'm sure every small business appreciates everything we can do.

There are so many other pieces of red tape that businesses have to go through every day whether it's federal, provincial or municipal inspectors that come. They've all got their own myriad rules. Slaughterhouses are a good example where they've come up with some arcane rulings, and we're down to very, very few plants where you can actually butcher meat in Ontario. That's why there are some problems with bacteria and that, because this food is being butchered and slaughtered in larger and larger plants. In the old days, when there was a small plant in each small community, if there was an issue raised, it was more localized. Now we're having these major recalls of products. That's one of the reasons small businesses have been forced out of business, and now you have these large plants. They may be more efficient; there are always opportunities, though, for risk.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the rest of the afternoon and the debate. Let's get this bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. I would like to make a point to inform the members that I'm proud to be the husband of a woman who is a fourth-generation business owner in her family business. Her family has

owned a car dealership in the small town of LaSalle for 83 years, and they've been selling vehicles in LaSalle—an unbelievable legacy of small business in small southwestern Ontario. And why is that? Well, you know, I ask Jenny all the time, "What's happening? How is it going? What's the sentiment out there?" And one of the biggest things is consumer confidence. That's what really helps her business succeed and helps her employ people and to grow her business. What does consumer confidence mean? That means people have good-paying jobs to have disposable income to be able to make those purchases: buy a car, buy a home, put new wheels on the car, do some tune-ups. All that type of economic stimulus happens when we have an economy that fuels good-paying jobs, not bottom-of-the-rung, temporary, part-time, minimum-wage jobs, the type of jobs that, yes, my friends to the right of me would love to see dominate our economy here.

Absolutely, when you come into Ontario and purport that the panacea for all of our economic woes is right-to-work legislation that drives wages down to the bottom line, I say to you that that is the recipe for disaster, and we see it in the southern United States. We see it going all around the United States where it does nothing to help small-town Ontario. It simply devastates regional economies and contributes to those empty storefronts that we see.

Let's stand up for good-paying jobs. Let's stand up for small businesses. This is one way to do it, and there are very many others that we could get to work on in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Bob Delaney: This is the second time in less than half an hour I've had an opportunity to agree with my colleague from Essex, whose comments were very well made.

You know, Speaker, in our western Mississauga neighbourhoods of Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, small businesses want and need to have the benefits in this bill out working for them, and the best way to help them do that is to get this bill to committee. The best way to get it to the committee is to stop dragging it out and just let debate collapse and send it to committee.

1520

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I'll now return to the member for London-Fanshawe for her reply.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you to the members who commented on this bill, because it is very important. It's good to hear that we can find some common ground—when we hear the member from Mississauga-Streetsville saying this is the second time today that he has agreed on something in this House that we were discussing.

Speaker, it's absolutely, unequivocally a fact that small to medium businesses are the drivers of our economy. They employ so many people. Because of those small businesses and medium-sized businesses, our com-

munities are successful. So it's paramount that we look at this bill.

I know the member had said that we should shut down debate if we all agree. I'm always a proponent of democracy. If anybody has anything to say on this bill, if we've heard it before—because your voice is your constituents'. Even though I have spoken on the bill and maybe have said things that other members have said, it's very important that everyone has an opportunity to speak up for their ridings and express the voices of their constituents on this bill.

I know that in my area, we have the BIA—in my part of London, the Argyle community—and the BIA is instrumental in making sure that that community thrives. As long as those businesses can be successful, I know that our neighbourhoods are going to be healthy. We're going to promote small business and make sure those jobs are there for those kids who need those summer jobs and the people who need those part-time jobs, who may not be looking for full-time jobs.

Absolutely, as the member from Essex has said, there's no substitute for good-paying jobs with benefits, with retirement packages, so that we can make sure that when people work for 20 years in an industry, they retire in dignity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 105, which amends the Employer Health Tax Act.

Last week was Small Business Week, and it is fitting that we're discussing a bill that attempts to relieve the burdens which this government has placed on them.

Having been the small business and red tape critic for our party in the past, I know what difficulties these businesses face. To be frank, this bill does not achieve nearly enough in the way of assisting small businesses. This bill moves the bar of eligibility for business from \$400,000 to \$450,000 and does nothing to relieve the burdens which continue to hamper our economy and restrict job creation. In fact, I think the benefit can be calculated, after taxes, to represent about \$850.

Small and medium-sized businesses are the backbone of our economy, as they represent 99% of all Canadian companies and employ nearly two thirds of private sector workers.

In 1996, when our party introduced amendments to the employer health tax, we designed it with small businesses in mind. Our strategy focused on minimizing the burdens on small business. In contrast, this government is looking to provide some relief, through this tax exemption, but it is in turn shifting the burden to larger businesses so that those who make \$5-million-plus will have to pay more. In essence, what they are giving to one, they are taking from the other, and this hardly makes for a prosperous Ontario.

The short title of the bill is Supporting Small Businesses Act, but the irony is that there is little in this for Ontario's small businesses.

Our party has put forward over 200 ideas that will help strengthen our economy, create jobs and rein in government spending. However, this Liberal government is continuously seeking to move forward with their destructive, job-killing policies.

The list of burdens for small businesses is a long one, and this bill does little to address the problem. For example, there is the increasing power cost for both on- and off-peak pricing. While consumers can adjust their uses at home, small businesses have little ability to do so, and now, where they may have been able to shift their use, this government is hitting them with an increase in off-peak pricing.

Then there's the costly College of Trades tax hike, which is driving young people away from industry, where this province is experiencing shortages. This government brought in Bill 119, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act. This forces small business owners to pay WSIB premiums for themselves, and now they have floated this idea of introducing an Ontario pension plan, which will further increase the cost for these businesses by doubling their payroll tax.

For each of these, I think of individual people in my own riding who have come to me to complain about some of these examples that I've provided. There's the pizza shop owner who has to use peak power. There's the trades tax and the young people. One of my own staff member's sons has moved out of the province and has reported the opportunities that are there for him, in this case in Alberta, that don't exist in Ontario. A single-employee business complained to me just recently about Bill 119 and how he can't afford to pay the kind of premiums that are being suggested.

At the end of the day, the Liberal rationale for this bill is about as effective as rearranging the deck chairs on the Titanic. So before you dump Gatorade on yourselves and claim being champions of small business, you should take a look at your record.

Let's look at recent data. The most recent Stats Canada statistics from 2011-12 have illustrated that Ontario has lost over 2,500 small businesses, more than 350 medium-sized businesses and more than 300 large businesses. These amount to significant losses in our workforce and do little to put the over half-million unemployed individuals in this province back to work.

I'd like to present to you an example from a constituent who contacted me with difficulties he was experiencing as a result of the policies this government adopted in the previous Bill 119, which came into effect this year. He has a small construction company and is the only person who works within it. He has a bulldozer and works at an hourly rate. He subcontracts most of his work to other companies, and they can't pay him unless he has WSIB. WSIB bases their rates on his company's gross income and not his personal income. However, if he gets hurt, WSIB only pays him what his personal income is and gives him 85% benefits. This is how this government proclaims to help create jobs and stimulate the economy. He says, "My customers will not pay a 7% increase, and I

can't absorb this cost, as well as the increased fuel costs lately. Please help me and other small companies."

Let me provide you another example of a constituent who has a small business and is being burdened by the College of Trades tax. He says, "This affiliation with this college will cost me \$120 per year or more since I have both a motor vehicle mechanic licence as well as a truck and coach mechanic licence." He goes on to talk about how, if he does not join the college, they will post his name for public viewing and publicly shame him to illustrate that he is suspended due to nonpayment of dues. As a result, he will not be able to legally practise his trade or call himself a journeyman. He says, "I successfully completed the specified college program and successfully achieved a certificate of qualification for my trade. I have achieved my college graduation, and as I understand it, this will be removed from me unless I pay this extortion demand."

How can this Liberal government stand before this Legislature with a bill called the Supporting Small Business Act when they have done just about everything but support small business? Bill 105 is just window dressing and does not address the real issues that small businesses face. I think it is safe to say that under this government, even with Bill 105, the future for small business in this province is bleak. Where our party looks to stimulate our economy and create jobs, this government is more focused on driving them out, because even when they are perceived to help small business, they are not. The people on this side of the House aren't fooled, and neither are small businesses.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have one.

Mr. Steve Clark: Boy, that was enthusiastic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for Parkdale-High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's how much I love small business. I will run to make a comment about it.

First of all, I just wanted to thank the member from York-Simcoe for her comments, and for everybody's comments, actually. We support this bill. We want to see it go forward. I want to point a couple of things out, though, that people at home—if anybody's watching out there—should know.

The best place to have a small business in the country of Canada is in Manitoba, the only NDP province. Why? Because the small business tax there is 0%. Here, you heard the government crowing in one of their stand-ups about a 4.5% small business tax. We actually were seminal in having that happen, by the way, because we pushed for 4% and they came back with 4.5%. But in Manitoba, it's 0%. Why? Because small business provides 85% of new jobs. That's the reality. It's not big business. It's not the EllisDons of the world. It's small business.

My son has a small business, I had a small business, and my daughter had a small business. Trust me, Mr.

Speaker, small business folk, most of them, are hanging on by their fingernails these days, and they're doing that because of conditions that have been set into motion by the last 10 years of government rule here—and probably before that, too.

One of the major asks of small business right now is not only about the small business tax, of course, but it's also about MPAC. MPAC and their ridiculous assessments are killing small business. That's something that has to be reformed, and they're very concerned about that. Of course, gridlock is another. There are a number of concerns of theirs, but again, I just want to emphasize that the best place in Canada to have a small business is the province of Manitoba, with zero—did you hear me right? I feel a little bit like Mel Lastman—per cent interest.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak on small business today. I think that the best place to debate this and to improve it, if improvement is needed, is at committee. I think we have more than 10 hours of debate.

And I'll say to the member of the third party that I don't think it's because it's an NDP government in Manitoba; it's because they have a wonderful Premier. The NDP in Nova Scotia—look what happened to them. They just disappeared. They went from 31 seats to seven seats, so look at who is leading in Manitoba.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a couple of minutes of comments to the member from York-Simcoe for her speech.

I first would like to comment about something that the minister of community safety and corrections, and the minister responsible for francophone affairs, just said about collapsing debate and allowing this to go to committee. If this government was confident and had the confidence of the public, they wouldn't be afraid to debate their policies. They wouldn't be afraid to stand by, put a speaker up and defend why this bill is before the Legislature.

I believe that the member for York-Simcoe hit the nail on the head when she talked about how this has got a great, cute title. It tinkers around the edges, but it does nothing to reduce the burden that many small businesses in our ridings right across this province have told us about as members of provincial Parliament.

Now, her riding is certainly not the same demographics as my riding, but I think we share some similar concerns: concerns about electricity, the concerns about WSIB premiums and small businesses. I heard loud and clear from people on the weekend how upset they are with this government for increasing those premiums for those small contractors, who, I might suggest, had a lot better coverage before it was mandatory for them to be covered.

As well, the College of Trades: I agree with the member for York-Simcoe and the member for Simcoe

North when they talk about the job-killing trades tax that the College of Trades is putting forward. I can't believe this government can sit there—and the member said it adequately, that they would dump Gatorade on themselves and high-five themselves, thinking that they're the champions of small business. Well, Speaker, they are all wet. I have to tell you that. They're certainly no champions of small business.

This bill tinkers around the edges.

I can't believe the government opposite is afraid to debate their policies in the Legislative Assembly. It's unbelievable, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Interruption.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: That baby, I can see, puts a smile on all the Conservatives' faces, so maybe they'll be in a good mood later on this afternoon.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: We're always in a good mood.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: You guys are always in a good mood; okay. Well—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Wait until the baby finds out she's \$20,000 in debt.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Our post-secondary education costs are skyrocketing in Ontario. They're the highest in this country, and we need to do something about that for that generation.

We also need to do something about supporting small business. Supporting small business is vital, as I said earlier, to healthy communities.

I hear that there's a consensus that we're all looking to support this bill in order to pass it through the House. I mentioned this before, and I agree with the member opposite, that full, robust debate needs to be continued if anybody wants to speak. Even though we might have full support on a bill, it shouldn't shut a member down from speaking on the bill. So I hope that all who wish to support this bill, who wish to see it pass to committee, will stand up today and speak to the bill and get the voices from their constituencies heard.

In saying that, Speaker, there's a lot more that we can do with this bill. We did make some suggestions earlier as to how to improve our economy with tax loopholes. Larger corporations will take their profits and shift them around from province to province—subsidiary companies, even foreign companies—and it's not a good thing because we have infrastructure here in Ontario that they also have taken advantage of, in a sense. We've got our hospitals, our roads and our education system, so that corporation is benefiting from those services that we have here. We need to close those corporate tax loopholes too, so that money stays in Ontario, and we can generate revenue so that we can better our economy. Everyone has to do their part.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I'll return to the member for York—Simcoe for her response.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the member for Parkdale—High Park, the Minister of

Community Safety and Correctional Services and the members for Leeds—Grenville and London—Fanshawe.

I think that there are a couple of things that emerge from this. One is, the opportunity to debate is something that, quite frankly, makes us unique in the world. There are many places where this would not be allowed to happen. I think it's very important that we are able to exercise our right to debate.

I'm inclined to come to the same conclusion as the member for Leeds—Grenville. Why would the government not want to defend what it's doing? It seems very strange to me that they are willing to give up that opportunity.

The question about the regulatory burden is one that comes up in conversation amongst every person, I dare say, who is elected to this Legislature, because there are so many irritants that people have. I can tell you one story where the Ministry of Labour said, "You'll hang the door this way," and the Ministry of the Environment said, "You will hang the door this way." Ministries can't even agree on what they should be doing.

Another constituent—"You have too much chlorine." "You don't have enough"—Ministry of Health, Ministry of the Environment.

When people are trying to earn a living in an environment which is so burdening and even contradictory, it makes it very difficult for them to feel confidence in the kind of regulatory regime that they live and work in. So we should put this task at the head instead of looking at bills that sound cute, like the Supporting Small Businesses Act. We're a long way from that.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Your time will come, member from Simcoe North.

It's an honour once again to be able to stand up on behalf of the good people of Timiskaming—Cochrane and talk about Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, 2013. Before the people from Timiskaming—Cochrane who are watching this afternoon—if they are—get too excited, the Supporting Small Businesses Act, although it does have some stuff for small business, is not quite as big as the title. I think other people have said that, and I think I'd like to reiterate that.

It's particularly, for me—I've been a small businessman for 30 years. I had an honest job for 30 years. The one thing I know—my small business was a dairy farm. Small businesses depend on each other, and that's how they make the economy in small towns and in big cities run.

I bought my tires from a small business. It used to be Ivan's Tire Sales; now it's Kal Tire, Royal Tire and Goodyear. I bought my equipment from Brownlee farm equipment in Earlton. I bought some from Trudel farm equipment in New Liskeard. I bought some, actually, from Green Tractors in Earlton—all small and medium-sized businesses. One business couldn't survive without

the other one, and the economy couldn't survive unless all these businesses work together—a very important one.

A few other ones I'll mention: I had a dairy farm, but I also had cash crops, and when I wanted to sell my crops, I usually dealt with Koch Farms in Earleton and sometimes with the temgrain Co-op, but a lot of times with Koch Farms in Earleton.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Are you a real farmer?

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, now I'm a part-time farmer. I talk for a living half my time now, but I used to farm full time.

Small business faces a lot of challenges, and some of those challenges are with regulatory burdens. We need regulations; you're not going to see a member for the NDP standing here saying that we've got to scrap regulation because, you know what? Regulations keep us safe, and regulations keep our products to high standards. But there are cases where regulations just don't make sense. We all have examples; I've got a couple of nice examples.

I have Creative Meats in Markstay, and I'm very fortunate that I have, in my riding, three abattoirs, which is pretty amazing. I have a big riding, but it's fairly far in northern Ontario, and I have three abattoirs.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Give them time; they'll shut them all down.

Mr. John Vanthof: Well, not if we can help it, not over here. Creative Meats is one of my fine abattoirs, and as a service to their customers, they also smoke fish. This is all legal; this is not under the table. This is legal. They smoke fish as a service to their customers.

Interjections.

Mr. John Vanthof: That's right. I believe, if I remember right, Gilles told me it was about 30 pounds—I'm pretty sure it was 30 pounds a month. Anyway, MNR would like him to pave his yard to control the runoff from his fish-smoking operation. Please. There is an example of bureaucracy gone mad.

If there's one thing that small businesses would hope for when they hear a title like "Supporting Small Businesses Act," they would hope that there was someone out there who could actually streamline regulations.

From a small business background, when I hear people say that we've got to get rid of regulations, as a dairy farmer—oh, oh, oh, because the Milk Act is a regulation, and without the Milk Act, we don't have supply management. So we have to be very careful with regulations. The devil is in the details, and the details are in the regulations.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Or in the red tape.

Mr. John Vanthof: Or in the red tape. Thank you, member from Kitchener–Waterloo.

We do have to streamline, and regulations have to make sense. They have to keep people safe; they have to keep products safe. But they have to make sense, because otherwise they're driving people out of business.

Earlier, I was watching some of the remarks here and I was listening to the Speaker as she made her remarks.

She brought up a case of WSIB. I also have problems with WSIB. I've got Barret from Temagami Electrical, who has got exactly the same problem, where the premiums are charged on his gross. That doesn't make sense.

I don't have a problem that everybody has to pay WSIB; I really don't. I would have a lot easier time defending it, though, if when they needed to claim WSIB because they've already paid into it, they could actually claim what was rightfully theirs when they are hurt. I don't know about the rest of the offices, about the other 106 representatives here, but I know in my office some of the toughest cases and some of the most gut-wrenching cases are the WSIB cases, people who you know aren't trying to rip off the system; they're not trying to do things that are unjust. They're just trying to claim what is rightfully theirs because they paid into a program that was supposed to protect them for when they were hurt at work, a program that is good in principle, a program that should work. But when they're unfortunate enough—because no one wants to get hurt at work—when they're unfortunate enough to get hurt and for some reason they can't get what's due to them, their lives, in some cases, are decimated. Those are the toughest cases we have to come to our office.

Do I believe that everybody should pay into WSIB? Yes, but WSIB should work. But that isn't covered in the Supporting Small Businesses Act. It's a very big part of small business, but it's not covered under this act.

What is covered under this act is there's a bit bigger exemption for the EHT premium, from \$400,000 to 450,000, if your payroll is from \$400,000 up to \$450,000. That's a fairly big business, but still kind of a small business. For me and for the other members, the difference between a small business and the big, ugly corporation—because, you know, there are lots of regular small corporations, too. A lot of my farmer friends are corporations, right? The difference is that a small business is invested in the community, and if the community does well or does badly, they ride it out. The difference with a big corporation is if the community is not doing so well, they just go to their other branch plant in Mexico. There's the difference. When we suggested taking this exemption out for big companies, they're the people we wanted to catch, the people who have the lawyers and the accountants, and they have no patriotism to their town, no loyalty.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No skin in the game.

Mr. John Vanthof: No skin in the game; that's a good one. They just look where they can make the biggest profit on their dollar, because they're totally mobile and they really couldn't care less. Those are the people who we're trying to make pay their fair share.

That is something that we really have to keep in mind here, folks. No one likes to pay taxes. No one likes to see their tax dollars wasted—something that people on the other side haven't been that good at. They're really good at wasting but not too good at figuring that out. Everyone should pay their fair share. That's what we were trying to

do when we suggested that outfits like the Royal Bank shouldn't qualify for this exemption.

1550 One of the other things we pushed hard for—and it is kind of included in this bill—is that people can't split up their companies so they have separate little payrolls to get that exemption.

There are some things that are in this bill. It should perhaps have a smaller title.

I support this bill going to committee, but there are a lot of things that we could do to make Ontario an even better place, a much better place, for the people who actually make this economy run, the people who are invested in this province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak about Bill 105. We have spent 10 hours and 30 minutes on this debate, and furthermore, 42 members have spoken on this bill, whether it's 10 minutes or 20 minutes. I just heard the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane say he supports this bill going to committee, unless I heard that wrong. It's time to go to committee and further discuss and fine-tune the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I look forward to my chance to speak on this Bill 105. Hopefully, it will come up this afternoon. I think it's funny that the member opposite would be talking about the rights of people talking to bills. It's our chance to give input. Sometimes we even have good input that they support, but not often, as in this bill.

But the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane stood up and was able to use his time. I guess it disappoints me when I hear him talk about the big, ugly corporations because I think if you look around at these supposedly big, ugly corporations, some of them have done very well by Canada, and we've done very well by them. I think that they could be important job creators.

But unfortunately, we live in a world today where the borders have disappeared. No longer can we demand people to pay more for a product in Canada because it's made in Canada. People want to see quality, and they want to see something that's competitive.

We're seeing more and more of our companies move because they can no longer be competitive and stay in Ontario. They can no longer pay double the price of electricity that they pay in Quebec, Manitoba or Michigan.

But whose fault is that? Is that the fault of the corporations that are seeking to get the best deal they can for their customers, or is it the fault of this government, this Liberal government that has made working in Ontario unaffordable? If they were to go back in 2003 and say they were going to double or triple hydro rates, do you think that would have happened? Do you think they would have had the chance to do that? No.

They talked last week, bragging about closing down the coal plants—clearly five or six years later than they promised and at the expense of the consumers in Ontario.

I look forward to my chance. I just heard that the best speaker is coming up very soon, so we'll hear him talk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I appreciate the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry's preamble to me speaking in the next couple or 10 minutes. I don't think I'm going to be the best speaker, but I certainly will contribute to the debate—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: One of the best. I appreciate that.

I do want to commend my colleague from Timiskaming-Cochrane, who, as a small business owner, knows the challenges and knows what it takes to own and operate and put your heart and soul into a small business in the province of Ontario, not only a small business of general sorts but one in the agriculture industry that adds value: our local food production. I've often said, when it comes to the importance of business, of our economy, we can have manufacturing out the wazoo—I don't know if that's parliamentary—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: No, you can't say that? I just did.

But, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the free trade agreement has shown us is that manufacturers will go to the lowest-wage jurisdictions that they possibly can, but our primary food producers, those farmers who feed us, if we lose them, then we are at risk in terms of the sovereignty of our country. If you lose the ability to feed yourself as a province, as a jurisdiction or as a nation, you are at incredible risk of losing your sovereignty, which is all the more reason that we have to find various mechanisms to support our small businesses and our primary producers, who are mainly small businesses. They have been exceedingly washed away by multilateral free trade agreements like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, GATT, in 1988—they supported, they initiated it, the Conservatives did—the free trade agreement, NAFTA, and now CETA. These are detrimental to our domestic economy. I can't believe that nobody gets it in here except the New Democrats, but we'll stand alone in support of small business in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to rise yet again on this one, and perhaps talk about a few small business success stories, such as we've seen in western Mississauga. During the recession, our area became an aerospace hub. One of the firms leading it started out as a small business, and that firm, Cyclone Manufacturing, would actually benefit—even though it's now a large business, a firm such as Cyclone at its stage of development six or seven years ago would have benefited from exactly the measures proposed by this bill.

We need to have those measures enacted. We need to have small businesses collecting the benefits and we need to have small businesses putting that money to work in

our communities. The best way to do that is to get this debate finished, get this bill to committee and keep it moving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We go back to the member for Timiskaming-Cochrane for his response.

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to be able to stand up. I would like to thank the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, the member from Essex and the member from Mississauga-Streetsville.

First of all, to the member from Scarborough-Agincourt, I think—

Interjection: You may not have been the best speaker, but you're close.

Mr. John Vanthof: No.

I resent the fact that there's some kind of insinuation that we shouldn't be able to put the feelings of our constituents on the record in this House. That's what we were elected to do, and if we choose to have something that is important that we believe should be put on the record about regulation or about WSIB, and if this is the only chance we can do it, I fully believe it's our job, our responsibility, to make that happen.

To the member from Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry, I would like to make it clear that I was differentiating between small business and big business. There are many big businesses in my riding, and my riding depends on big multinational corporations. What I'm trying to get at is that the big, multinational corporations need to pay their fair share. We fully support—I have big mining conglomerates in my riding and big forestry conglomerates in my riding, and we work together with them all the time. They play with a different rule book than small business, and that's what I was trying to say.

Member from Essex, I agree that farmers and agribusinesses are very important to this great province.

The member from Mississauga-Streetsville took some time to talk about how he felt this bill would help. That was his time to do that, and I appreciate that. We will want this bill to go forward and be made stronger in committee, but everyone should have the right to speak to it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm happy to speak today to Bill 105, An Act to amend the Employer Health Tax Act. It's a bit rich with this government bringing out a small business type of tax—I've just been jotting down things throughout the afternoon, a kind of list of things they've done to make it really tough for small businesses. This original bill in 1996, going to \$400,000, was a Mike Harris piece of legislation, and although it's taken them 10 years in government, they are increasing it. So let's at least say at this point that the government gets it a little bit.

However, I have to look at the kind of complaints I get today. I haven't seen the kind of complaints I'm getting

today—no offence to the New Democratic Party, but the last time we got the kind of complaints from small business people that I'm getting today was in 1995, when Mike Harris made changes to a lot of the—

Mr. John Vanthof: Were you there with Mike Harris? Were you there?

1600

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I wasn't here, but I was a small business man at the time. I can tell you at the time I was managing a small business, and every week we would have to send a fax to Mike Harris's office and say, "Please keep up the work you're doing," because most of us were almost out of business following the five years of Bob Rae.

However, we made those changes. We were criticized for things the Harris government had done. Of course, the main criticism came from the current government.

So what have they really done to help small businesses? Well, I guess the first thing you could look at is the hydro rates in the province of Ontario and where we're going with this ridiculous hydro system that seems to be completely out of control. Each and every week, we hear a new idea, a new announcement. We've had so many Ministers of Energy that I can't even count how many have been there anymore. But you know what? What I do know is that hydro rates are going up all the time, continually, all the time.

Probably the biggest disaster to small business that we have seen as a result of hydro is the global adjustment. I can tell you one case, although it's not a small business but it runs on a business procedure, is a hospital. Our local hospital—and I'm not going to mention the name of it because someone will probably be critical of them—it's over \$500,000 a year of health care money that is going to pay the global adjustment fund. Add all that up across Ontario and see what that means. But all these little manufacturers that are using hydro as their main source of energy are paying the global adjustment fee, too, what are they getting out of it? Nothing. Increased costs, making it more difficult for them to compete with the American states.

I can't say for a second that a Conservative government, particularly myself, would not support this bill in the end. I do support it going to committee, and I support everybody having a chance to speak on it. I support the fact that, when we get it to committee, we'll listen to recommendations and amendments. That's what we do in committee, and I hope it can happen.

But if you're talking about a government—I heard some of the comments earlier. Let's talk about the WSIB for a second. Bill 119, does anybody remember that? Bill 119 added about \$11,000 onto the costs of the average contracting business. That's \$11,000. They brag about increasing it here a little bit, but you know what? That was an actual cost. People who had their own insurance 365 days a year, 24 hours a day, they had their private insurance, and now they're paying two ways because the WSIB doesn't cover those people after their workday is done. That alone is reason for cause. At the time, we

pointed it out. I forget how many businesses were impacted by that, but to the tune of literally thousands of businesses in the province of Ontario.

That takes us into one of my favourite topics in my critic's portfolio: the College of Trades. As recently as last week, the government has not proclaimed section 7 of the College of Trades Act. So I brought a private member's bill to say, "Well, if you're not going to proclaim it, why would you let this hang over someone's head, this section 7?" That just means the College of Trades can, in fact, impose this. I want it removed from the piece of legislation originally so that no government and no College of Trades board of directors can actually tax the employers. There's no reason in the world they should be taxed. It should never have even been in the act. But the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities says, "Well, you know what? We're not proclaiming it. What's wrong with you? Blah, blah, blah, blah." So what's wrong with me? I want it removed. I don't want it looming over the heads of our small businesses across this province of Ontario. And I hear it continually from our contractors etc.

Also look at what this College of Trades has done. You've imposed a fee to hire trades cops. The trades cops are going out there, two at a time, by the way, and they're running into hairdressing salons. Give me a break. If a woman or a man doesn't like the haircut they're getting, they go to another hairstylist. They don't need two big thugs walking through the door in a fancy car and fancy uniforms—almost like the hair police or something—and saying, "Where's your licence?" Where have we gone in this province that we've become so pathetic that we need a trades cop to walk into a hairdressing salon? How bad has it got here? Is it really that bad? This isn't Ecuador. This isn't Venezuela. This is Ontario. Give people a chance. Let these hairdressers and barbers have a chance to do their job. Who cares if they don't have a bloody licence? If they don't have a licence, who even cares? What's the downside of it? Next thing, we'll be going after ratios for barbers, making sure that you have 3 to 1, making sure you never have an apprentice barber in there or apprentice hair salon. Can you imagine how pathetic that is? And they haven't even started on the non-compulsory trades. That's our little College of Trades. I think we should remove section 7 and support the bill that I've got.

God, have I only got three minutes left? Oh, this is getting bad. I should have been here for the 20-minute round.

Hey, I don't know how many of you people are hearing about abattoirs and meat inspectors. There's hardly anybody left to inspect. Yet they come in now, and I've got them in—I understand that as many as four different inspectors can go into a meat shop now. The member from—

Ms. Catherine Fife: Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: —Timiskaming–Cochrane mentioned the smoked salmon. I have the same situation. They come from the MNR. They come from Peter-

borough to my area to check out one company that has got an unbelievable reputation for good service, probably one of the top places you can buy food north of Toronto. This MNR group is nagging this guy continually over the fact that he smokes salmon, he smokes meat, and he's just not quite doing it perfectly. But it gives the guys from Peterborough a good reason to drive all the way over to Orillia to nag this guy for the day. That's the kind of support you want to give small business, so half their time is spent talking to the inspectors.

I can go on and on and on here. I've also got to tell you—and it's sort of a topic that I hear a lot about from our general contractors and people with gravel pits etc. Those people are basically telling me, "We're going to give up." There's so much red tape. There's so much influence by the government and the government ministries, the silos they're all working in that they're saying to me, "The next step, we're done. We're just shutting the doors and getting out of it." I heard that as recently as Friday night with one businessman. He said, "We just put up with so much all the time." Everything is oversight: the College of Trades, the Ministry of Labour, all the different municipal bylaws.

The fact of the matter is, it's not fun being in business, and when it's not fun being in business they don't spend money. They're not entrepreneurial anymore. That becomes a real problem, Mr. Speaker, when you lose entrepreneurship. That's what's happening in Ontario right now. There's not a lot of small businesses that are expanding. There was a recent study done and I think it said that—they asked small business people, "How many of you would actually expand?" Something like 70% of people said there was not a hope of expanding or hiring more people, because I think in a lot of cases the fun has gone out of it. That's wrong in a province like Ontario that has always, since 1867, been the engine that has driven this Canadian economy. They've done phenomenal work, our small businesses, and they've created most of the jobs. When Ford or GM are laying people off sometimes, the reality is that small businesses have been the people who have picked up the slack. It is only the small businesses in the private sector that will create the jobs and get us out of this mess that this government has got us in. That's the only thing we can do. Even then, it's going to be one hard, hard job to do that, because when you're spending at the rate of \$1.9 million an hour more than you're taking in, you've got a problem. Where's that money going to come from? Who are these people who will drive that economy?

I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I'll take someone else's time if I'm allowed to do that, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate that opportunity to speak to Bill 105 today. Thank you very much for this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to actually stand up and talk about a piece of legislation which does have the potential to positively impact small and medium-sized businesses in the province. I listened closely to the

previous speaker's comments, and he brings those unique stories to this House, which is his job.

I will say, though, that ultimately the way that we see the world and the way the PC caucus sees the world are very different. We do see this as a matter of fairness. Certainly there's been enough consultation on it. There's no need to strike a panel on this. The people from the province who are directly involved with small and medium-sized businesses have weighed in. I think it's important for us to know that the chambers of commerce and small businesses support this change because of the exemption increase to \$450,000.

1610

You know what's really key is that what they recognize, and what they see, is that at least in this minority government setting we've come together. We've tried to find some consensus. I mean, we've been very clear that we feel that this piece of legislation can be stronger, and actually it will be stronger because of the minority government setting.

But there are many start-ups in Kitchener-Waterloo who are looking for anything to make the economy stronger and to make their reality as a start-up business potentially stronger. So they see this as a small step, a signal from this Legislature that someone here is listening, and I think what we're saying back to them is that, okay, this is a good first step. We want it to get to committee. We want to be part of a positive solution to grow the economy for small and medium-sized businesses. We'll be supporting Bill 105, and we'll be extracting some concessions in that regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise again to speak in support of Bill 105. Mr. Speaker, today we have 50 members from the House, from all three parties, whose support is on record about this bill. Furthermore, we have about 11 hours of debate to date, okay?

I want to clarify that the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane accused, or criticized me—that members don't have a right to speak. I want to be on record: There's ample opportunity to speak either in support or against Bill 105, either through the chamber here or when this bill goes to committee.

As you know, when we go to the standing committee, not only will members go through clause by clause, but it also allows Ontarians to come before the standing committee to improve the bill. It's absolutely important that everyone who wishes to speak can speak.

I also want to remind the member from Simcoe North that we're debating Bill 105. It's not about the Ontario College of Trades. At the end of the day, I also hear from constituents who do support the College of Trades, to make sure that work from small businesses is being protected and seniors are not being taken to the cleaners because of shoddy, unethical construction work.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's have a healthy conversation, but at the end of the day, this bill needs to go to committee so that we could have more robust conversation to improve the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Simcoe North's comments. I have to tell you, Garfield Dunlop, the member for Simcoe North, is just a wonderful MPP. He's done such a great job in any portfolio that he's had. I know he's a former community safety critic.

I had the pleasure of being at the Ontario Provincial Police Association President's Banquet on Thursday—president Jim Christie. I know that Garfield was great to introduce me around to some folks. The minister was very cordial as well and recognized me.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I offered you a ride.

Mr. Steve Clark: I know you did. She offered me a ride. That's right; she did. She offered me a ride in the company car.

I do want to say that the member speaks with a lot of experience. I know, in my riding, I hear a lot from my constituents. He mentioned hydro rates and the global adjustment. I hear that a lot. I heard it this morning at an event in my riding.

But it's the other issues that he mentioned, specifically the WSIB, Bill 119: I get that all the time. I got it on the weekend at car shows, at festivals and events, from my neighbours. This is a huge obstacle for small business. I read into the record last week comments from some of my constituents.

But it's the issue with the College of Trades: The member for Simcoe North has had over 125 meetings with tradespeople, and he speaks with experience. He's a plumber by trade. He ran a small business, as he said. He was a small business person in 1995, before he was elected in 1999.

Section 7: I think this is a no-brainer. The government should grab his private member's bill, enact it, give it three readings to prove to small business owners that section 7 shouldn't go through.

And as well with the trades cops: I can't believe that trades cops go to barbers and hairdressers. That's totally ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, totally ridiculous.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to, actually, add my voice to the member from Simcoe North. He mentioned the importance of entrepreneurship and the fact that there seemed to be a growing trend that entrepreneurs weren't in a position or weren't able to expand, or weren't interested in expanding, not because they didn't want to, actually, but because the conditions were just not there for them to expand.

I think that's a troubling trend, because what we're seeing in our societies is that the societies where the industries or the communities are most successful are the ones that are able to encourage entrepreneurship, particularly knowledge-based entrepreneurship. We look at a country like South Korea, which has very limited natural resources, but they have one of the most powerful economies in the world because of their ability to transfer

the knowledge of their citizens into entrepreneurship, innovation and development. They have some of the most successful companies because of that.

Many economists and experts in the field of how to develop economies have talked about the future being a place where it won't be about as many multinational or large corporations; it will be about many smaller, knowledge-based, entrepreneurial organizations. If we want to keep up with the times, and if that's the direction that we're headed in, we need to make sure we create a climate that supports those small businesses and those entrepreneurs.

The problem with this bill is, though it adds a small benefit, it's not a changing of the climate. It's not an innovative approach to creating a place where small business can thrive and flourish. It's not doing that, and that's what we need to see in this province. We need to see a concerted effort to look at the differences between the smaller businesses and the medium-sized and the large ones, and what we can actually do to implement policies that would encourage their growth and encourage their flourishing. That's what we need to see more of.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay, that concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Simcoe North for his response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I appreciate the comments from the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Scarborough–Agincourt, Leeds–Grenville and Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

I think most people in the House, in their comments, have sort of come up with the same trend: If Bill 105 is an improvement to the employer health tax, we're there to support it.

I think what we're trying to point out, though, overall—and I think the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton summed it up as well, in saying that you've got to change this mentality where you lose this entrepreneurship. I think we've really taken a step backwards that way.

It's not that you're losing it from everybody. There are a lot of small business people who are aggressive no matter what, but I think it's the higher percentage of people, people who just can't stand the red tape anymore. They're tired of trying to collect bills, and government oversight, and what they're saying is, "You know what? I just don't want to hire anybody else." In fact, some people say, "Well, if you want to start a small business in Ontario anymore, you get a big business and you let it grow, and it becomes a small business." I hear that. I'm not kidding. I hear that from people, particularly in construction and that. That's what they're telling me. I mean, I'm not talking to people around the province who have doubled the size of their work crews or anything like that. That would be wonderful news. I think most people feel that there's been a real issue in the fact that they've lost this sense of entrepreneurship and creating jobs and buying new trucks and expanding their shops etc. That's a problem.

I look forward to further debate, and I also look forward to the kind of amendments that might be made to the bill at committee as we move this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 105, the Supporting Small Businesses Act. As I mentioned, I believe, in one of my two-minute hits previously, I'm proud to be the husband of a small business owner. My wife, Jenny, is the fourth generation of a small business in LaSalle, a car dealership, a Chevy dealership, which they have owned and operated as a family business for 83 years. It's a long time.

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you very much to my colleagues.

It's a long, long time, so they know how to do it right. They know how to service their clientele, they know how to service their community and they know how to be a part of their community. They are a really integral part of their community in LaSalle.

I'm incredibly proud of that business and the workers there. They deliver great service, and I buy all my vehicles from that dealership. Imagine that.

Interjection: As you should.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As I should; of course I should. They're General Motors products.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, I come from the riding of Essex. Windsor and Essex county are really at the epicentre of manufacturing in Ontario. We are also, unfortunately, the canary in the coal mine when it comes to the implications of free trade agreements because, as I have often said, I could almost drive a golf ball across the Detroit River onto the other side; we are so close. That's because I can drive a golf ball pretty far, but we are very close to Detroit and the state of Michigan, which has a heavy reliance on the automotive sector as well.

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So when the initial free trade agreement came around, the FTA, myself as a youngster and my parents—my mom was an automotive worker at GM—went and we protested. We actually blockaded the Ambassador Bridge. It was the first and only time that that bridge had ever been blocked by human beings in protest to anything. In fact, it was in protest, and we joined farmers and small businesspeople in protest to the original free trade agreement. Lo and behold, there was an election platform on behalf of Jean Chrétien to not pursue the North American Free Trade Agreement, which involved Mexico, but we saw that that went ahead after the election.

We have seen, since that time, the degradation of our regional economic base in terms of our tier-one manufacturers and, ultimately, the suppliers and those small businesses that rely on having a heavy industrial presence and large manufacturing base. They have all left subsequent to the free trade agreements that we signed. Why have they left? Well, because NAFTA says you can produce goods and services abroad in the cheapest wage jurisdictions on the planet and sell them without tariffs to countries like Canada and the United States. Of course, there are some measures of reciprocity there but not enough to make up for the trade imbalance that we have subsequently when it comes to manufacturing.

My point is that those large manufacturers, those large corporations that originally were encompassed under the employee health tax benefit reduction, really are few and far between these days. They operate in other jurisdictions and simply sell us our goods. I hear often in this House that we're losing so many jobs in manufacturing. Well, that happened well before the first sitting of this session. It certainly happened well before the Liberal government took place. It happened, really, in the early 1990s and late 1980s when these trade agreements were signed.

I've felt it. I see it in my communities every day. I see it with the closing and orphaning of massive manufacturing plants. I look at the Lear plant that my mom used to work at, which is just an empty vacant lot. At one point, it employed 4,000 people. Those are good-paying manufacturing jobs. Where did those jobs go? They went to Mexico—gone. See you later. So to point to the real nucleus of where our manufacturing jobs were left and what existed prior to that was the Auto Pact, which said that if you're going to sell it here, you're going to build it here. Was it a protectionist mechanism? I think it was a fairness mechanism.

All that being said, the makeup of a healthy economy is what I'm pointing to, where large manufacturers had a responsibility. They had a footprint in this country, and they created jobs. That trickled down to our smaller communities. In my riding of Essex, a beautiful, wonderful riding, there are various hamlets, about eight or nine different hamlets: Essex, Belle River, LaSalle, Amherstburg, Kingsville, Ruthven, Pointe aux Roches, Cottam, Comber. These are small towns, and they have small businesses. This is what I see. When I talk about small businesses, I see the small automotive repair shop. I see the small diner, your hairdressers, the Main Street where you've got your shops there, and there are people who live sometimes within the building, on top of the building or behind the building or somewhere in that community. Over the last dozen years, I have seen those storefronts vacated and empty storefronts with cardboard on the doors, out of business without any real hope of returning. It speaks to a fundamental failure in our broader economic strategy here, one in fact in which this province and this country don't have a manufacturing strategy. It's ad hoc; we just make it up as we go. Potentially, this is one of the ad hoc measures that came about, where the employer health tax credit was given to large employers, which we know are not the primary job creators at this very moment. As important as they are, they haven't been pulling their weight. They have been fleeing this jurisdiction for the cheapest wage jurisdictions on the planet.

Again, that's just my opinion, my impression of where we have come from and what the real issues are that haven't been tackled here. Will this be one measure that supports small businesses? I think it will be. Again, I'll consult my wife to see if it has any impact on her small business.

By and large, I think it's a fairness measure, one that makes sense to the broader public out there, that large

employers that far surpass the threshold here, in terms of the \$450,000 employee tax range, should not be exempt from that. They can certainly afford to do that. Companies like EllisDon, which profited somewhere in excess of \$3 billion annually, are the companies that we certainly think can contribute a little bit. It speaks to the broader strategy that we have here when it comes to supporting small business.

I will tell you, and it has been widely reported and widely spoken about, at least from our New Democratic caucus, that the province of Manitoba, under a New Democratic government for the last eight years, I believe—a majority New Democratic government—has successively lowered the provincial small business tax. I believe it started at about 4%, 4.5%, where ours is right now. Currently, guess what the small business tax is there in Manitoba? Anybody know? Raise your hand. Anybody know?

Interjection: Zero.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Our caucus knows, because it's zero; it's nothing. They absolutely support their small businesses in the province because they know that they are economic generators. They support them because they know they're members of their community. They know that they actually create jobs, and they know that they contribute to regional economic development. That's a signal, a strong signal, from a New Democratic government that they can—we can—support small businesses, in our province, in our jurisdictions, not piecemeal approaches, as we've seen not only with this bill but also so many others that have come across the floor of this House, but with one that I think is an important measure that signals the full, unequivocal support of small business and the understanding of the role that they play.

I spoke earlier about consumer confidence. We have one of the highest personal debt ratios in this province right now. People are holding more debt, whether it be credit card debt or household debt or student loans, than any other place in Confederation. Until we address that issue, so people feel consumer confidence to not only tackle their debt and to manage their personal finances but also that their employment is secure—those historic jobs that I talked about that used to be in Essex county, those ones that my mom had, that were able to sustain a family, that had benefits and a pension, until we get back to that era, then all the efforts that are put forward by this government, as I've seen them, are for naught because the larger issues continue to loom, in terms of overreaching, overarching, multilateral trade agreements like the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, CETA, which will play havoc with our domestic economy. It will wreak havoc on our manufacturing and our agricultural base and put us even further behind than we currently are.

I appreciate the time, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thanks to everyone who spoke on this bill. There has been a number of members in this House who have spoken at length. We've had 11 hours of debate, and over 50 speakers. It's starting to remind me of what happened over the last year and a half, when a lot of the legislation was stalled.

I urge all members who support this bill to pass it. Let's get the second reading passed. Let's get it into committee. Let's get it there so that we can really do the work that needs to be done, perhaps to strengthen it, make it better.

Without circumventing the democratic process, I think, we can move forward on this rather rapidly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to comment on the member from Essex. I guess I really wonder about his belief in these trade agreements. Canada is a trade exporter—there's a positive trade balance. If we can't protect our markets where we're able to sell our products, what hope do we have that these countries will allow our products to leave?

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We talk about small businesses and their inability to compete. Do we simply want to put up a wall and no longer have access to the products? Everybody in this House has a BlackBerry that was invented and, at one time, was produced in Ontario. Through the regulation, the rules—these are manufactured products that are very high tech, manufactured, but we cannot compete, even in the fields where we specialize and export our technology. They send them outside the country because they can't afford the inputs; the hydro and the regulation behind things. It's one thing not being able to afford the labour and setting the outputs, it's another thing when you're mechanizing these products, and it's still cheaper to do it elsewhere. That's what we've seen from this government.

It's interesting as well that they—the third party—talk about some of the issues, but everybody remembers the Bob Rae days and what happened then. I think the biggest problem this party has is people's memories. They ran this province into the ground. They were crushed by the voters because we could no longer afford to give our people more days off just to help balance the books. You've got to balance the books.

We've seen this latest Liberal government go to even higher ranks. These guys did a great job on our debt; they brought us to a point where we can hardly afford to live in this province. But as good of a job as they did, the Liberals have really polished this off and done a great job: We're heading into a debt of \$30,000 per person in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise here to speak on behalf of my constituents in London West and to respond to some of the comments that were made by the member for Essex.

I think he made a really important point when he talked about the purpose of a tax structure. A tax

structure is supposed to be fair; it's supposed to ensure that tax incentives go to the companies and the individuals who are doing the most to create jobs. The small businesses in our economy that provide employment, that make our communities economically prosperous—our tax system should be geared to ensuring that those small businesses have the support that they need to do what they do so well, which is to create jobs.

Companies that get public dollars in the way of forgone tax revenues have an obligation to use the public dollars that they get, in terms of not having to pay taxes, to keep our economy moving. I think that this is one of the key issues or key features of this legislation, that it eliminates a tax exemption for employers with payrolls of \$5 million or more from paying the employee health tax. There's no reason that those very large corporations should be subsidized through public dollars with an exemption for the employer health tax when they are not the businesses that create jobs.

I really thank the member for Essex for making those comments. This is a very important issue for my constituents in London West. We are pleased to support this legislation and want to see it go to committee so that it can be improved even more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 105 in response to the comments made by the member from Essex. I was a small business man for most of my 35 years—it grew to be a larger business. All issues have to be considered, and I'm glad to see that the exemption on the health tax has been raised from \$400,000 to \$450,000. I think that's great.

Small businesses are encouraged by our government. We have reduced the tax rates probably about 50% in the last four years. In successive budgets, they've come down; they're still coming down. This is important. We know where the jobs are created in our province, and it's extremely important.

I hope that we can end the debate fairly soon and that it goes to committee and then comes back here and becomes law. For small businesses, it's not a huge change, but it's an important change and it shows that we're still working toward making the burden for small businesses less and less. That has been done, as well, through getting rid of red tape as much as we can. This is part of the government's policy for the last three or four years, and it has been happening.

I hope that everyone supports the bill, that we get it to committee and that we get it back here and make it legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. We return to the member for Essex for his reply.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank the members for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, London West and Ottawa—Orléans for their comments.

I failed to mention that, living on the border of Detroit and Windsor and having such a large prominence of

accessibility to the US market, the whole discussion and debate around cross-border shopping has been a prevalent one within our area for generations, really. Many times we see people go across the bridge and shop in the States. They fill up their trucks and do that.

I can tell you personally that my parents didn't do that. We made a conscious decision to shop locally. We were actually pretty vocal about the need to support small businesses and to shop locally, and I know my dad lost a couple of friends over it, in terms of him arguing with people about the importance of keeping your dollars in your country and supporting the people who support you.

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry makes the case for cross-border shopping when he says that if BlackBerry is making their product overseas, at least we're getting a cheaper product. Well, yes, we may very well be getting a cheaper product, but we don't have any jobs attached to that. Why not ensure that we promote ourselves and that we have the resources here to expand domestic production and value-added jobs, and not simply be a resource exporter, but also somebody who develops and has a plan and a strategy around comprehensive strategic economic development, whether it be in large businesses or small businesses? We have this laissez-faire attitude—let it be; let the free market reign; it doesn't matter; let the chips fall where they may. That's your problem here in this House. Nobody seems to want to acknowledge it, but it's staring you in the face, and I can't wait to get the chance to address it as government.

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Durham on a point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: With your indulgence, Speaker, I'd like to introduce a very good friend of mine from Peterborough, Dave Hacke. He's here with one of his friends, Patrick McCarthy, from the Ontario Long Term Care Association. More importantly, he's from Peterborough and he's a great supporter of Scott Stewart, our PC candidate for the riding of Durham.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's not technically a point of order, but we welcome you to the Legislature nonetheless.

Mr. Michael Harris: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Kitchener–Conestoga on a point of order.

Mr. Michael Harris: Earlier today, my colleague from Leeds–Grenville rose on a point of order with regard specifically to the Minister of the Environment not responding to order paper questions that were submitted. I would further like to add my name to that growing list of responses to order paper questions that had been submitted about six months ago and which are in fact roughly a month late.

I'll go on to read some of them. For instance, 230: "Will the Minister of the Environment please provide the waste diversion targets and the actual waste diversion rates for the municipal hazardous or special waste program?"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I rule on this point of order, and find that the member for Kitchener–Conestoga does have a valid point of order, although he doesn't have to read the questions again.

I would remind the government that they are required, under standing order 39(i), to file a response within 24 sessional days. The government's responses are now overdue and I would ask that one of the ministers give some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask one of the ministers who are present in the House to inform the House as to when the response is likely to be forthcoming.

I'm pleased to recognize the Minister of Community Safety.

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Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm pleased to answer on behalf of the government. As it is the practice, the minister will reply. Although in the question that was asked, we know that the environment is not the priority for this member, but I'll make sure that he does answer.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on a point of order.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I, too, reviewing back, am appalled by the record of the order paper questions. I submitted six questions almost six months ago to the Minister of Consumer Services, and I have not received answers—examples like Taron coverage of installations that are part of the building's structure, with built-in HVAC systems being included.

I think that six months is—there's no excuse for that type of delinquency, and I think it's time that we move on with the question—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Upon checking with the table staff, we find that the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry does, in fact, have a valid point of order.

Again, I need to remind the government ministers who are present in the House that they are required, under standing order 39(i), to file a response to order paper questions within 24 sessional days. Those responses are now overdue, and I need to again ask one of the ministers in the House to give the House some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

I again recognize the Minister of Community Safety.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: As I said not very long ago, Mr. Speaker, it's not that they do care about the environment, but we'll make sure that we answer as soon as possible.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the Minister of Community and Social Services on a point of order.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, in 2000, when I was elected, I had a number of questions, and I put a couple of those questions, as part of the order paper, in 2001, and I'm still waiting for answers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the table staff to see if they have any records of standing order paper questions from 2001.

I don't find that the member has a valid point of order.

Further debate? The member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Applause.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you, thank you. I appreciate that from my colleagues.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's because you're wearing blue.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Perhaps it's because of the colour of my turban, which is no indication of the colour of my politics.

I'm pleased to rise and speak on Bill 105, Supporting Small Businesses Act. My colleague from Kitchener-Waterloo actually raised a great point, and in my comments, I want to address this.

Time and time again—and it's not just me—my colleagues, both in the NDP and in the Conservative Party, have said that this bill doesn't do very much, and it seems to be a bit of a trend. It's not just this bill but many of the bills that are brought before this House by the Liberal government. The response from both the Conservatives and the NDP—we're saying the same thing. One of the points that we're saying is that you're not really bringing forward any ideas that are significant in their impact on Ontario. Your goals and your ambitions are set—your aim is so low, and I want to question why it is that your bills are so unambitious.

It's a question that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo kind of prompted me to ask and to look at, because if you look at what this bill is doing—and it has been mentioned—really, there's an exemption on the employment health tax. In fairness, it makes sense; it's something that we asked for. We said that you needed to bring forward a bill that addressed the fact that companies making less than \$5 million in payroll, or that have less than \$5 million in payroll, are obviously in a significantly different position than companies that make over \$5 million—their payroll is over \$5 million. The exemption shouldn't exist for companies that have a payroll over \$5 million—fair. We've asked for you to do this, and you're finally bringing it forward.

But if you're calling the bill the Supporting Small Businesses Act, that's a pretty bold name for your bill. The content of the bill is not really bold at all, right? I mean, the bill should be called Getting Rid of the Exemption on the Employer Health Tax. That would be an appropriate bill. And you know what? We wouldn't get up here and say that this bill isn't doing very much. If the bill was called what it is, which is the “getting rid of the exemption” bill, then we would get up and say, “You know what? Your bill is doing exactly what you're

saying you're doing.” But it's when you come up with these bold names like Supporting Small Businesses that it causes us to question where the actual support for small business is.

I think about the small businesses in my riding. I think about all the restaurants, the retail, the professional services, the small manufacturers, the services that are provided and the service-industry-related small businesses. I think they're calling out for some real assistance. They could benefit from a shift in the way we treat them. If we really wanted to support small businesses, we'd do something more significant, something more innovative, something more impactful.

My colleague from Essex brought up a great point. If you look at Manitoba—this is an NDP idea from an NDP government in Manitoba. It's innovative. It's a bold and a strong message being sent in Manitoba, where they have a 0% small business tax credit for companies—or a 0% corporate tax rate provincially for small businesses that net less than \$500,000. That's a progressive idea that supports small businesses in a meaningful way.

When I think about what we can do to support small business, there was a group of students that came to my office, and they had a very innovative idea. What they wanted to do was, they thought that the downtown core of Brampton was kind of failing; it was kind of falling behind. There wasn't a lot of growth in downtown Brampton. So they thought to invigorate and instill some growth and to create some entrepreneurial spirit in the hub of downtown Brampton. Their idea was to take a building and to create something that's very commonly done in Toronto, and it's a great idea. There's the 401 building on Spadina and Adelaide which has done this. What they do is they take a building and they share the day-to-day costs. They share the cost of the wireless Internet. They share the cost of the printing. They set up small offices that are affordable, that have a shared-cost mechanism, and they have the ability for the different businesses that are set up there to work with each other. They have a theme. They are small businesses. They're entrepreneurial. They have innovative ideas, and they're from various sectors. So they can combine graphics design with magazines, with innovative ways of looking at brand marketing and strategies for developing brands. They have synergies that can be built.

These students came with that idea and said, “We want to build something very similar to that, that we see many examples of in Toronto. We want to bring something like that into Brampton because we don't have that in Brampton.” There isn't a place where small businesses and youthful entrepreneurs, or entrepreneurs of any age, can get together and have a community of other small businesses that want to launch their start-up company. They want a space where they can share the costs so it's more affordable to actually start the business, but they also want to build off one another. There are shared business opportunities. One company that may be coming up with an idea about brand strategy and marketing can help out a magazine that's developing a niche market that

could also work with a graphic design company to come up with the way that the design will be laid out for that magazine.

The synergies that could be built—it was a great idea. But they said, “Well, what can we do to get this started? Are there any opportunities for us? What can we do to bring this idea to fruition?” If Bill 105 was truly a bill that was supporting small businesses, then it would provide some way that I could go back to those students and say, “Hey, we have a bill here that has been brought forward. It would actually help you out. It would provide you with a way to get this done.” But it’s really not doing that.

Another concern or area of disappointment is when you look at what’s going on in our province when it comes to the principle of the concept of addressing the budget or the fiscal realities in a fair manner. We’re talking about fairness here, with the NDP. We’re talking about looking at the fiscal realities and addressing them in a way that is fair. The reason why I’m bringing that up is because there are significant areas of investment where we need to invest in our infrastructure. We know that there are significant areas where infrastructure is in disrepair; it needs to be invested in.

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We also know that transit is a large concern, a growing concern and a serious concern in terms of the economic loss that we’re facing in the GTA and across Ontario, that the lack of ability to move around this province is significantly impacting—is seriously and dramatically impacting—people’s ability to find jobs, to move around the city. While they’re going to and from their jobs, while they are in transit, they are neither able to contribute by working, nor are they able to contribute to the economy by consuming or purchasing. If we invested in transit, we would be able to invest in our economy. It would be an investment in our economy as well.

But what we’re seeing this government, the Liberal government, do is that they want to put the pressure or the obligation or the cost of this investment in infrastructure—they want to put all the cost on the backs of working people. They want to look at ways—they call them “revenue mechanisms,” which are ways of raising funds off the backs of people.

Now, everyone wants to contribute in a fair manner, and everyone understands the responsibilities that we all have to make our society better. But if we look at the trend here, instead of supporting small businesses or supporting working people, we see a concerted effort on the part of this government to disproportionately favour corporations and disproportionately place more burden and pressure on working people and small businesses.

Instead of looking at the scenario and saying, “Listen, we need to help and make sure that the people who are the most vulnerable in our society are protected, we need to ensure that everyday families are protected and that their livelihood is ensured, and we need to make sure that our corporate citizens, who are integral members of our

society”—big businesses provide the employment and employment opportunities, but they need to be paying their fair share. We need to look at the differences.

What we’re looking at is, over the next number of years, the Liberal government is planning to—with a series of corporate tax loopholes and giveaways, over the next couple of years, it will cost, from now to 2031, \$35 billion in lost revenue to Ontario’s treasury.

Over that same period, the Liberals are talking about the need to raise \$34 billion in transit infrastructure. Well, that’s pretty troubling. If we’re giving away, through corporate tax giveaways, \$35 billion by 2031, and we need to raise \$34 billion in transit, there’s clearly a disconnect here. That’s a problem with this government.

We need to make sure that things are done fairly and measured and protect our people, instead of favouring corporations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened with interest to the honourable member’s speech. I’ve listened with great interest to a lot of honourable members’ speeches on this particular topic, including the two-minute interjections. In fact, someone did the math, and if you include the two-minute interjections, over 50 members have spoken to this bill.

It is an important bill. I have heard some on the other side who wish it had gone farther, it was enhanced in a certain way. But I think, overall, everyone supports the idea of lowering taxes for small businesses.

Mr. Speaker, I would call on all members of this House to wrap up this debate and allow the bill to proceed to the next stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O’Toole: Well, it’s encouraging to know that at least the NDP is taking some of the time that is committed to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. Probably it didn’t have the same theme as I do. Theirs would be to tax more; ours would be to tax less. So you can differentiate here.

But I’d say this: Some of what he said was actually wrong and discouraging. He was saying that the big companies are fine. I worked for a company for 30 years: General Motors. It’s not fine. These larger companies are struggling under the price of energy and the corporate tax that’s imposed.

I think there’s an alliance between the Liberals and NDP, so let’s be clear about that. They supported the budget. They’re the ones that closed down the horse racing industry. So let’s not listen to the people who are going to make it worse.

I think the best way to do it is to look at the media and what they’re saying. This is an article for the viewer, primarily. It talks about the “stolen decade.” This outlines a list of failed policies by the current government.

Bill 105 is a bill that deals with small business—or so they say. Well, in Ontario today, the advice I could give

viewers is this: In Ontario, how are you to create a small business? You start with a large one and tax it to death until it's finally a small one. That's what they probably did to BlackBerry, in my opinion. But that's just my opinion.

Having the right, proper balance in tax and policy to grow a business, to create investment and to encourage investment from abroad is the right strategy. If you want to know part two of this, look at the 14 papers—Paths to Prosperity—by our leader, Tim Hudak. This is the right plan for the right time for Ontario, not just for our youth, but for people who are out of work because of the failed policies over the last decade. What's going on in Ontario is a shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise, on behalf of my constituents in London West, to respond to some of the comments that were made by the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I think he really does represent, in many ways, the new economy, the new knowledge workers that Ontario will be relying on to move our economy forward and ensure a prosperous future for all of us.

But he talked about a couple of things that have particular relevance for me, as someone who represents the community of London West. He talked about this whole concept of social innovation shared space, with young people coming together, young entrepreneurs coming together in a context where they are able to feed off of each other, where synergies are created and ideas are allowed to flourish—green shoots of innovation allowed to really take root and blossom. It's those kinds of initiatives that we really need in this province if we're going to really support entrepreneurs and small businesses.

We know from research that the social economy is where young people are looking for employment. These are the kinds of opportunities that young people really want to take advantage of. If we're serious about getting jobs for our young people, then we should be doing more to enable that kind of social innovation to take place.

The other comment the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton made was about the importance of transit. We know that public transit is absolutely fundamental to a local economy, to enabling people who work in small businesses to get to their place of employment, and this is what we need to see happen in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to speak on the Supporting Small Businesses Act. Speaker, I can tell you, from the perspective of my community of Ottawa Centre, that I have hundreds, if not thousands, of small businesses in my community, represented by seven very strong business improvement areas. When I'm out in my community of Ottawa Centre, they want this tax break to come into place. They want this law to pass, so that they can have a broader exemption from the employer health tax.

They are dismayed by the fact that we have now debated this particular bill for about 11 hours and 30 minutes and it's not moving on to the next stage—i.e. committee—and then coming back for third reading. I urge all the members to please let this bill pass at second reading. Let's send it to committee so that businesses like those in my community of Ottawa Centre can take advantage of this tax break, prosper further and create the great jobs they create in my community of Ottawa Centre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I now return to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his response.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I would like to thank all the speakers, including the government House leader, the members for Durham and London West, and the Minister of Labour.

Beginning with the member from Durham, the member from Durham would like you to believe that the same idea that has failed time and time again would work if we just did more of it. If you have an idea that doesn't work, just do more of that idea that doesn't work and eventually it will start to work.

1700

That, to me, is one of the worst ways of creating policy. We've seen what has happened when we just blanket cut corporate tax rates. They don't benefit the people of the province. Even the economist that you love to speak about so much, Mr. Drummond, talks about all the dead money that corporations have, money that they're not investing in communities, not investing in creating new jobs or building infrastructure. It's because if you give someone, especially a corporation—it's not wrong; their job is to make money. They're looking at making profits.

If we continue to give money to someone with no incentive, no strings or no accountability, then they're just going to keep that money. But if you implement a system much like the NDP has proposed, connecting corporate tax rates or cuts to job creation, then you have an incentive. Then there are some strings attached. That's the way forward, creating a new approach, looking at the problem, looking at the issue with a new solution as opposed to doing the same thing again and hoping that you'll get a different result.

I think we need to look at our entire approach to small businesses with a new lens. New ideas with a new lens will create an impactful change for the better.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Thornhill.

Mr. Peter Shurman: In reviewing the order paper questions, I note the item numbered 265, which was a question I put to the Minister of Finance back when I spoke to the Minister of Finance, I guess, a long time ago, on April 29, 2013. It was a complex question that had to do with the total cost to the Ministry of Finance for the use of third-party outside consultants, which firms

were used, what was the total number of billable hours and what was the total cost to the ministry.

I recognize that would take some time to put together, but I believe that ministers have 30 minutes—30 days; 30 minutes would be nice—to respond to these kinds of questions. April 29 is a little bit more than 30 days, Speaker

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I find that the member for Thornhill does in fact have a valid point of order. It's my duty to remind the government that they are required, under standing order 99(d), to file a response within 24 sessional days to a member's order paper question or written question. The government's response is now overdue, and I would like to ask one of the government ministers to give us some indication as to when the written response will be forthcoming.

I recognize the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the same point of order: We've obviously taken note of the concern expressed by the member. I can speak on behalf of the minister in question and say that we will have the answer as soon as possible to the member and the Legislature.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise, actually, on a similar point of order as my friend from Thornhill. I asked a question back in late April. I believe it was April 29 that I submitted the question to the Clerk of the Legislature for the Ministry of the Environment.

It just seems to me, Mr. Speaker, that when the government is talking about being open and transparent and saying that's what they're attempting to be, and then not answering questions that are of serious concern to residents in our ridings, they should be held to account for that.

On April 29 this year, I asked if the Minister of the Environment could explain why his ministry isn't following the recommendation of the Environmental Commissioner and is, instead, placing wind turbines in an area that the commissioner recognized as environmentally unfit for such a project. Mr. Speaker, I have residents of Prince Edward county waiting to find out why the Minister of the Environment would take this kind of action, and they shouldn't have to wait six months to receive a response from members of this government.

I find it appalling and reprehensible, actually, that this government continually stands up every day and says they're open and transparent, but we find it takes six months to get an answer back. That's unacceptable, and it's certainly not acceptable to the official opposition. I would hope we could get a response for the residents of Prince Edward county as soon as possible, because this government simply isn't living up to its obligations. It's not living up to expectations.

I know that the people of Prince Edward county who are waiting to receive this kind of information from the

Ministry of the Environment find this unacceptable, reprehensible and appalling. They shouldn't have to wait six months to get an answer to a question that was asked—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I need to interrupt the member and ask for clarification. What question number is he referring to? We're just checking here.

Mr. Todd Smith: Number 83, Speaker

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I find that the member in fact has a valid point of order. Again, I need to remind the government that they are required, under standing order 99(d), to file a response to a member's written order paper question within 24 sessional days, and again remind the government that their response is now overdue. I would ask one of the ministers present in the House to give some indication as to when the response to the member for Prince Edward–Hastings will be forthcoming.

I recognize the government House leader again.

Hon. John Milloy: I've taken a note of the point of order that was raised by the member and the inquiry of the ministry. I can speak on behalf of my colleague the Minister of the Environment to say that that question will be provided as soon as possible, Mr. Speaker.

I would also like, on a very similar point of order, to point out, having gone through the order paper and noting from 83 down to 304 on the order paper, that there is a list of questions which are outstanding. In anticipation that that point might be raised, I wish to give an answer that I will raise it with all my colleagues who are pointed out here and that those answers will be forthcoming as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate the government House leader's indication that all of those outstanding order paper questions will be responded to as soon as possible. I'm not able to entertain more points of order on this particular subject of order paper questions that are outstanding in the numbers that the government House leader specified.

Further debate.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Just a point of order, not to be left out by the House leader: I did have a similar point of order on order paper question number 77. I don't know if he intentionally left me out. I put that in on April 25. I think that the House leader did say from 83 on down, so I just wanted to make the point that number 77 was my question. I submitted it April 25. I don't want a committee. I just want an answer to the question that was asked of the Minister of Consumer Services about the gas and propane stations in rural communities remaining viable. I'd like an answer, if that would be possible. Since we're in a transparent and accountable government, I'd appreciate number 77 being answered.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock does in fact have a valid point of order. Again, I'm compelled to remind the government that they are required, under standing order 99(d), to file a response within 24 sessional days to

order paper questions. The government's response is now overdue, and I would ask that one of the ministers present in the House give some indication as to when the response will be forthcoming.

I look to the government House leader and recognize him.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I've taken note of number 77 raised by the member. I can speak on behalf of the Minister of Consumer Services to say that that answer will be forthcoming as soon as possible.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yes, very briefly: With respect to order paper number 199, which again was submitted April 29 of this year with respect to the Toxics Reduction Act—now, that's an act that was passed a number of years ago—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to say to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk that the government House leader has already indicated a willingness to get him a response as soon as possible in the list of questions that he indicated he would reply to as soon as possible. Thank you very much.

Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm pleased to speak on Bill 105 today. It's giving us an opportunity to discuss economic policy, or the lack thereof, on a broader scale. This government has given the people of Ontario some great platitudes regarding job creation and economic growth, so it behooves us to take the opportunity to examine Bill 105 today.

With 600,000 people out of work, it's important this government take the issue of job creation seriously. We have a glut of labour, and yet businesses face a number of challenges that impede their ability and desire to hire and expand. These challenges include cost pressures, high levels of bureaucracy and high energy rates. Certainly, on this side of the House, we put together numerous discussion papers chock full of ideas to stimulate our economy and get business hiring. We understand how serious an issue this is. For people who wake up without a job and struggle to find a means to cover their mortgage and feed their children, it's difficult to remain hopeful. They look to their government to take the necessary steps to get our economy moving.

1710

For its part, the government needs to ensure that our businesses operate in an environment that is more conducive to their success, because we all know the success of the private sector is what drives hiring. When businesses are hiring there are more opportunities for unemployed citizens to find gainful employment, and when people can find gainful employment and are able to provide for their families, we can all work together to build an Ontario that we can be proud of and pass on to our children.

The PC Party recognizes the importance of job creation, and that's why we recently offered to clear the

decks with the Liberal Party so that we could focus the collective efforts in this House on our economy. We came out and said that there's legislation before this House that we all agree needs to be passed. Everything from tanning beds to professional standards for our province's dentists, we said it's time to get these things pushed through. I'm proud to say that we worked with the government to accomplish that.

Now let's return to really get to the meat and potatoes of fixing our economy and creating jobs. Our ideas are well known. Anyone here can check out our party's website to see for themselves some of the practical, achievable ideas to get our economy back on track. Our leader has said that the government should feel free and welcome to steal any of these ideas. After all, they're not partisan ideas; they're simply ideas to put the people of Ontario first.

I was excited after the programming motion passed because I knew that the next job or finance or economic development bill that this government introduced would give us some good indication of how this government wanted to proceed on the important issues of economic growth and job creation. That brings me to Bill 105.

I have to say that when I first read over Bill 105, I was kind of bewildered. My bewilderment isn't the product of any opposition to the bill because I don't oppose this bill. The real source of bewilderment is that the Minister of Finance, the de facto director of this province's economic policy, would bring forth a bill that is so limited and would have such a minor impact.

Following the programming motion, I thought we and the Liberals were finally on the same page. I thought they understood the scale and scope of the issues facing our economy, and yet they brought forward this bill which is a positive bill but fails to go far enough to address the critical issues facing businesses. This exemplifies this government's approach: They pick something small and therefore, almost by extension, uncontroversial. They slap an impressive title on it, like supporting small business, that makes you think they're taking bold steps to reinvigorate our economy. Then, when you get into the fine print, you're disappointed in how little they've done.

The focus on small businesses is appropriate. After all, small and medium-sized businesses, like the pharmacy that's in my family, employ about 85% of Ontario's workforce. Inducing any kind of economic momentum has to begin with this sector.

I would like to take this time to review some of the calculations my colleague from Thornhill made regarding this bill. I think he made some very revealing calculations that are being lost in this whole debate. Like the member from Thornhill's business, it has a payroll of under \$5 million and the employer health tax exemption is a welcome one. Currently, my pharmacy is exempt on the first \$400,000 of payroll, which, under this bill, would be increased to \$450,000. I welcome any and all savings of money to any type of business, and I'm sure any business employer would. My colleague from Thornhill's mathematics, his calculations, have found out that

this additional \$50,000 will amount to a savings of \$975 per year per business. Let me repeat that: \$975. I can say for a fact that most businesses would appreciate \$975; however, it's not going to induce anyone to hire additional people to keep the hours of their businesses open any longer.

Let's take a look at how the private sector sees its future right now. In September, the CFIB released their regular Business Barometer. The Business Barometer is an index that CFIB puts together based on surveys they distribute to their members. It's based on a scale of 0 to 100. A score of 50 or higher indicates that business owners are expecting the performance of the business to be stronger in the next year than owners who are expecting the performance of the business to be weaker. CFIB has a lot of experience with this barometer, and it tends to be an economic indicator that investors and businesses look to. In their extensive experience with this number, the CFIB has noted that a score between 65 and 70 indicates that a provincial economy is roughly growing at its potential. In other words, supply and demand of labour is fairly balanced and unemployment is lower. So what do the numbers released in September tell us? Well, the economies in Alberta, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan exhibit a score of above 70, while British Columbia exhibits a score of 67. Ontario is lagging its peers with a score of 63.6.

I remember a time when Ontario led this country in economic growth and business confidence, but after 10 years of detrimental Liberal economic policy, the confidence of our business owners is fragile, and rightfully so. While it's nice that the government today is putting forward a measure to reduce taxation costs to small businesses, I don't think there's a business owner who has been operating in Ontario in the last 10 years who can forget all the times this Liberal government unexpectedly raised taxes to pay for their spending sprees. I'm sure no one will ever forget the former Premier famously pledging to not raise taxes in 2003, only to turn around almost the day after being elected and grab \$2.3 billion from taxpayers.

When you're running a business, uncertainty is generally your biggest challenge. You can therefore understand business owners who are somewhat skeptical of this current tax break. It might be difficult for some to make the decision to hire an additional staff member with this, when they know this government could overspend and come back next year and ask taxpayers and businesses to cover any shortfalls.

Certainly, taxes are a big consideration to businesses. However, if we return to the CFIB survey, it's interesting to note that the biggest cost pressure identified by Ontario business owners, while taxes do rank high, is energy and its rates. Energy rates in Ontario continue to skyrocket as this government continues to push its failed and misguided green energy agenda. Right now, industrial hydro rates are the second-highest in North America and are on trend to take the top spot in the next few years. When the Liberals took office, the total energy rate

was 4.4 cents per kilowatt hour. Now, just the global adjustment itself is 8.72 cents per kilowatt hour.

Our energy rates are quite simply out of control, and it's a cost borne by all business and, in some cases, can be quite significant. For instance, I have a business in my riding that was recently re-evaluated by our local utility company, which deemed that their energy usage necessitated their rates to increase. This caused their monthly hydro bill to jump 25%—over \$200 extra per month spent on hydro. Perhaps the government could put themselves in the shoes of this small business owner. On the one hand, when he files his taxes, he'll get an exemption that puts \$975 back into his business. However, on the other hand, thanks to the government's mismanagement of the energy file, his hydro costs will eat up that exemption within four months. No one would compel this owner to hire and expand. This bill simply does not address the real issues hindering our economic growth.

As I said, I will be supporting this bill. A little bit of savings on the business tax bill is better than nothing. However, this bill, as the first finance and economics bill introduced after we agreed to clear the decks of pieces of legislation in order to focus on job creation, is an embarrassing, puny effort to stimulate our economy.

Mr. Speaker, I've got a lot more to say. I'm running out of time here. I'd like to seek unanimous consent for an additional 10 minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London is seeking unanimous consent of the House so that he can speak for an additional 10 minutes. Agreed?

I heard several noes.

I return to the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I think we continue to see the true character of this Liberal government, and it reinforces my belief that they're out of ideas and that we need a new team leading Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise to respond to the comments made by my colleague the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London. Not only do we share the same geographical area in southwestern Ontario—our ridings border each other—but we also have similar backgrounds, coming from small business.

When you think about it, when 98% of all businesses in this province are small businesses, it makes sense that almost everybody sitting in this House should have a small business background. All of us who have worked in small business understand some of the challenges that face small business. They are real challenges; small businesses face real challenges with regulations.

We talked earlier today about some of the regulatory burdens that are placed on small businesses, and they could use some help with trying to streamline those regulatory challenges. Instead, as the member for Elgin—Middlesex—London noted, what they have in this bill that's called the Supporting Small Businesses Act is simply the elimination of a tax exemption that shouldn't

have been there in the first place. It's not a measure that is going to induce small businesses to hire more people. It's not a measure that's going to really do anything significant to create jobs in this province.

1720

It will address something that the NDP had pointed out was a concern a long time ago, which is good, and for that reason it deserves to be supported and moved forward to committee. But as the member pointed out, we need a lot more from this government if we're really going to get this economy and this province back on track.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to enter into the debate on Bill 105. This bill has already been debated for 12 hours. I strongly urge all members of this House to pass this bill so that it can go to committee, so that we can hear from our stakeholders and have clause-by-clause, and so that businesses in my riding and businesses in their ridings, as well as in Ontario, can benefit from this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Elgin-Middlesex-London—I think it's despicable, the fact that the House wouldn't allow the member to have a little bit more time to explain the first-hand experience he had running two or three small pharmacies in Ontario. He added a lot to the conversation because of the point being made of having experience in small business.

I think, really, the bill itself, its intent is correct, but when you look at some of the conditions they put on it, this is where I become suspicious, perhaps even cynical: when they cap this entitlement at a certain level of income. Why isn't it all business getting encouragement to invest? What are they going to do with that \$963 that they would get? That's the amount when you calculate the employer health tax that is being avoided by raising the threshold by this micro amount.

That \$963 wouldn't allow them to do anything more than place another ad in the local paper. That's about what it would be entitled to. This isn't enough, but what you should do is put it in a program motion with others, reducing regulations with respect to, perhaps, relicensing.

The one that bothers me most now is the billing that they are potentially going to send to small businesses that employ tradespeople, where they're going to have to pay this College of Trades tax. I've heard this mentioned in the House: one more example of a government that has run out of ideas.

But the member from Elgin-Middlesex-London and the experience he brought to it—I hope that he will be given more time. In fairness, I would try that approach again, of asking for unanimous consent, just to see if they're willing to listen.

I've heard two Liberal members stand up this afternoon, and they both spoke about how much time has been spent on this. Are they saying that democracy doesn't work? "It's my way or the highway"? Is that

what I hear them saying, that they don't want to hear from anyone, especially small business people who are a part of our caucus?

Read the Paths to Prosperity. There are 14 papers with ideas on how to get Ontario moving.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm pleased to follow my colleague from Elgin-Middlesex-London in regard to his comments that he brought to the debate. The member from Durham just highlighted something: I wish that, at times, the Liberal government would put as much effort into the meat and potatoes of their bills—specifically when it comes to small business—as the amount of time they take counting how much debate has happened on this discussion up to now. It's unfortunate; I enjoy hearing what my colleagues have to say, especially from their backgrounds. I really do enjoy hearing where you're coming from as far as your bill and how it affects individuals in your communities.

From a northern Ontario perspective, I can certainly bring you a perspective that we have. The member brought up a good point: the energy costs that come with small businesses. You referred individuals to go to your website to grab a look at it. I have to say that our member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, one of the points that he brought up earlier is that if you continue using those same old ideas, it doesn't mean that they're going to continue to work again. Actually, a lot of what I've seen proposed by the Conservative government is that they want to continue with the streamlining of privatization. If there's something that we've learned from history, back from the 1990s when they were there, it's that the privatization of our energy has not helped. It has actually expedited the costs on individual households.

We really, really, really need to look at this from a different lens and bring a different perspective of how we can help small businesses with the decisions that they make, because they do want to hire individuals and they do want to create more jobs, but the bottom line is the biggest factor at the end of the month is the energy costs. If we can't solve that one, it's going to be a really big uphill climb for them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments, so we return to the member for Elgin-Middlesex-London for his reply.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to thank members from London West, Algoma-Manitoulin, Durham and Mississauga-Brampton South for their comments. I could offer to do 20 more minutes if 10 wasn't enough, if you want me to continue on with another 20.

Small businesses are in trouble in this province. I think this government needs to do more than offering them \$975 a year, which isn't going to increase anybody's employment numbers in their businesses. It's not going to increase them to expand their business, expand product coming in. As was mentioned by the member from Durham, \$975 buys you a nice-sized ad in the local newspaper. They're helping with advertising for a week.

There are other measures that this government should have taken with small businesses over the last few years, in particular with the College of Trades, where they are planning to implement a tax on the employers of this province—the trades tax, which is section 7—which they refused to pull back out of their bill and which I imagine will be enacted soon in the new year, much like Bill 119, which was enacted on our local contractors and which added \$11,000 per year on their bottom line. Now, that's a tax. This \$975 that they're offering back to them is only a little smidgen of the \$11,000 that they're taking from these independent contractors in all our communities throughout this province.

This government falls short on supporting small businesses throughout our province, it falls short on maintaining a good economic policy and it's falling short on all Ontarians in this province.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent to revert to motions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to revert to motions. Agreed? Agreed.

I recognize the government House leader.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice with respect to private members' public business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to private members' business. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), the requirement for notice for ballot item number 54 on the order of precedence for private members' public business be waived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Agreed? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 VISANT À SOUTENIR LES PETITES ENTREPRISES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the member for—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Kitchener—Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker. I think that shows the need for members to be able to speak up in the Legislature, as we were all sent to do, and have the opportunity to speak to each and every bill should we

want, because the one-hundred-and-some-thousand folks that I represent don't get that opportunity to have their voice. Their voice speaks through this table and this desk, and I'm going to take that opportunity to speak to each and every bill. Bill 105 is one I have not spoken to yet, and I'm looking forward to speaking on behalf of the community that I represent, Kitchener—Conestoga.

1730

I'll refer to the bill as Bill 105, because the government tends to like to throw in these fancy titles to the bills, the Supporting Small Businesses Act; of course, that's what they call it. We have heard the other bills time and time again, so I'll just refer to it as Bill 105.

They are proposing to increase the exemption amount from \$400,000 to \$450,000 for the 2014 to 2018 calendar years; of course, not including inflation. I think that this legislation exemplifies exactly what is wrong with this government and their approach to governing. They're unwilling to go far enough to take the decisive action that is needed to provide real tax relief to Ontario businesses. I know my colleague John O'Toole from Durham, who just left, talked about the fact that, over the last 10 years, this government has made large businesses small, but what I see and hear is that they're making a lot of small businesses tiny, if at all. Too many of those small businesses are continually taxed and burdened over the last 10 years of this government.

More kicking around the edges by this government will not do enough to deal with the jobs crisis this province is facing. In fact, several hundred thousand Ontarians woke up this morning without a good-paying job to go to, or a job at all. We need to get those folks back to work. Unfortunately, this legislation comes at a time when we're struggling with skyrocketing hydro rates, increases to WSIB premiums and the College of Trades tax. I'll tell you, ever since I've been a member—two years now—the amount of emails and correspondence and phone calls I get on just those three issues alone would keep one of my staff members in the riding pretty much busy just dealing with that, especially from a lot of the small contractors who were initially hit, recently. I'll speak to that later on.

I know we have talked a lot about the fact that we on this side of the House actually have a real jobs plan. We have outlined that plan in white papers, which have been consulted on widely across the province and put forward by colleagues and critics, including our leader, Tim Hudak. I encourage all Ontarians to go to ontarioopc.com and have a look at the hard work that a lot of our critics have done to propose a solid jobs plan moving forward so that those Ontarians who woke up this morning will, in fact, have a job to go to.

As I said, this is a cleverly phrased bill by the government, Supporting Small Businesses Act. You know what? We have really saddled those businesses over the years, and I'll go through the list: dramatic increases in red tape and regulation, heightened taxes and soaring energy rates. Every time I go out into my community—and my community is still a manufacturing heart of

Ontario in the region of Waterloo. Unfortunately, though, we have lost a lot of good manufacturing employees.

I look at and drive by Budd automotive every day, almost, when I'm home on the weekend. I see the cranes and the Hy-Hoes in there, ripping that plant down. At one time, it employed 3,000 people making frames for automobiles all over the world. The people—my neighbours, friends and family—who went to work at Budd automotive every day now have to drive by that plant and see Hy-Hoes tearing it down because they have been driven out of Ontario.

Uniroyal-Goodrich, the BF Goodrich tire manufacturing plant; Ledco; MTD, manufacturing lawnmower equipment and so forth—Schneiders just recently is an example of another large manufacturing base that will have left our region. All have a lot to do with the fact that we do have soaring energy rates. The implementation of the College of Trades: I know our critic Garfield Dunlop, the member from Simcoe, constantly raises issues with regard to the College of Trades. WSIB premiums, the flawed Drive Clean program, outdated apprenticeship programs, 300,000 fewer manufacturing jobs: We need to address, really, the true challenges that are faced by small businesses in Ontario.

I know our finance critic, Vic Fedeli, when he did his hour leadoff, summed it up quite well. He said that Bill 105 should be called the "supporting small business while we stick it to them 100 other ways act," with which I would tend to agree.

Day in and day out, the government dreams up, of course, new revenue tools. This is a tax-and-spend government or, more precisely, a "spend first, tax later" government. In fact, this government, over the last 10 years, has doubled our debt. If they were a business, they would be out of business if they were spending like they do. It took 20 Premiers and 136 years to reach a debt of \$139 billion. Today, in just 10 years, our debt is \$273 billion. That's more than double.

We had a young person in the gallery this afternoon wanting to perhaps say his first few words. If only he could hear and know that in fact, before he did speak, he was already in the hole about \$21,000, thanks in large part to the government of today.

I know our son Murphy, who hopefully is watching at home, will be upset knowing that although he'd love to get all those new movies that he enjoys, he too will be straddled with such a large debt and deficit. It's unfortunate to think that his children and grandchildren will be further and further straddled with the decisions that have been made over the last 10 years.

I'll turn back to some of those reasons that I think small businesses are impacted today. We talk about energy rates, especially as we head into the wintertime. It's a time when those small businesses will have to incur more costs to heat and operate their facilities. We all know that the fortunate blessing of living in Canada is that we get four seasons, and the coldest one is upon us shortly. Ten years ago, we paid 4.4 cents a kilowatt hour. Speaker, if you could guess what it is today—we now pay double, at roughly 8.72 cents a kilowatt hour.

I'll tell you, power sector investment planning is inefficient, expensive and unsustainable. The government is actually using the electricity sector to support a range of shifting policy objectives, without critical examination of whether burdening the electricity ratepayer with the cost of such initiatives is economically efficient. We all know the mess that we've been witnessing over the last few months and year, with the cynical commitment by the government to move a power plant with really no diligence or respect for what it's costing the taxpayer, straddling the ratepayer and taxpayer with over \$1 billion worth of costs. Small businesses will end up paying for that, and that's good jobs.

Another issue I talked about is the College of Trades. The government's priority should be encouraging job creation and stimulating economic growth, not creating new fees and more barriers for our workforce. Instead, they've created yet another organization, with additional fees for small businesses, called the College of Trades. This trades tax has driven up the cost of doing business for professionals working in more than 155 skilled trades. Many of the small businesses in my riding still find no value in being part of this organization and are forced to pay \$120 in membership fees for each journeyperson. This is ridiculous. We heard an example just recently, with the member from Simcoe-Grey, or Simcoe, talking about barbers and hairdressers. It's just insane.

WSIB premiums, of course, for independent operators, sole proprietors, are now mandatory. Referencing an old bill, Bill 119 captured more small business people to pay mandatory premiums who would be unlikely to ever claim for an injury. Office workers in construction companies who never go out on a job site are now having to incur these costs. A lot of them complain, saying that they've already calculated this risk into the costs of their business and have their own insurance to cover them, should ever an accident even happen. So this is again just redundant.

Of course, as the environment critic, I've had the experience to see first-hand the further costs onto small businesses, like a tire tax, straddling farmers, who are in essence a small business, with taxes, for instance, on a John Deere combine from \$91 to \$823.

I notice my time is running out, and I'd love to ask for more. I don't think I'll get it, so I'll come back for my two-minute follow-up and conclude from there, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting that this debate is still going on. We've run out of speakers, but we do feel it's important to respond and to show some respect for the opinions that are shared in this House—

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: What's that?

1740

Ms. Catherine Fife: What's respect? I'm going to show some respect now.

The member from Kitchener—Conestoga comes from a primarily rural community, and there are some small and medium-size businesses, agribusinesses, that, quite honestly, are hurting.

When the chamber came forward and said, under Bill 105, "There is some good in this. Try to make it stronger. Try to demonstrate, as a party and as individual MPPs, that this is a step in the right direction and that some confidence has to be built into the issue of supporting small businesses"—it is true. I share some of the frustration, though, as the member from Kitchener—Conestoga, because I just don't understand why, when the Liberal government brings forward a new piece of legislation, that you just don't make it right the first time. There are a lot of things that we know can be supporting small businesses, everything from reducing red tape to incentivizing capital expenditures and capital investments. These are tangible ideas. We've certainly tried to bring some of those ideas to the fore through the job creator tax credit and certainly through our work in the last budget session to address youth unemployment. So we've just adopted a different perspective in this. We want to make this stronger, and we can when it gets to committee.

I understand the PCs' frustration. We share some of the frustration, but instead of just being frustrated, we actually want to get something done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to respond to the debate on Bill 105. I think if anyone were actually watching this debate at home they would be very hard pressed to figure out what it is we're debating. What this bill actually does is reduce the cost of health taxes for small businesses. It reduces the tax burden on small businesses.

There have been over 50 people from all three parties who have spoken to this, and as far as we can determine, every single speaker, all 50, have actually been in favour of doing what the bill does, which is reducing the tax burden on small business. So what is a total mystery to me is why, after 12 hours, we are still debating what all 50 speakers have said they agree on.

I would respectfully ask all members to allow this to go to a second reading vote, to go on to committee, where it could be fine-tuned if that's necessary. What we don't want to do is miss the opportunity to reduce taxes because we're all too busy talking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few moments of comments to my colleague and friend the member for Kitchener—Conestoga. He's a tremendous representative for the area. I had the pleasure of attending the University of Waterloo, and I know from some of my friends who reside in the KW area how well-thought-of Mr. Harris is as a member of provincial Parliament.

He mentioned decisive action. I agree with him that there are members of our communities who run small businesses who do want some decisive action by this government rather than a small measure like this bill.

I also want to say that I appreciate the fact that the member mentioned the wording of this bill, because I do believe that it's some very clever wording for this very modest improvement for our small businesses.

I do want to give him credit, though: He tabled a bill, Bill 73, the Fair and Open Tendering Act, that would have really helped municipalities and school boards—

Mr. Michael Harris: And small businesses.

Mr. Steve Clark: And small businesses. I believe that we owe him a big thank you for being able to table that bill. I'm so sorry that the other parties didn't buy into it because it would have been a tremendous measure, not a small measure. It would have been a pretty big measure for those municipalities, school boards and small businesses that want fairness and equity in the tendering process.

I also want, just in my few seconds left, to acknowledge some of the points he made regarding energy rates, the College of Trades and WSIB. But I want to take two points that he has, in his capacity as critic for the environment for the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, brought to this floor: the tremendous inequity with the Drive Clean program, the fact that it has got nothing to do with emissions now, but is just a tax grab in our communities, and also the tire tax. I was at an OFA meeting last year just after he uncovered this secret tire tax that the government put forward. It was a revelation at that meeting.

I just want to thank Michael Harris for all of his work, thank him for speaking to the bill and look forward to him being a champion for small business in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that engaging in debate today, simply taking one's opportunity to express their concerns and express the concerns of their riding, is not in any way delaying this bill in a way that's an affront to democracy. It is, in fact, in support of democracy that everyone takes the time that they feel is necessary to add their voice, to add their concerns and, really, to do the job of representing their communities.

I take issue with the fact that members of the Liberal government continually have been getting up and saying, "Let's just wrap up the debate and get on with it," and that there's some way that this is delaying the process. This is a part of the process. Allowing debate is part of the process.

At some point in time, there will be a moment where members have completed their time to speak and they've felt that they've expressed the concerns of their riding, expressed the concerns of their constituents, and then this bill will take its course. But to discourage debate, in the manner that the Liberal government has been expressing their frustrations with members in both the NDP and Conservative Party, to me is troubling, and I think that's something that we oppose. That's why we will respond to the concerns that are raised by the member from Kitchener—Conestoga.

With respect to his particular riding, I think the idea that we were speaking of—and the member from London West also joined me on the idea of supporting social innovation and innovation where there is collaborative work, where we have synergy between different busi-

nesses and particularly start-up companies, particularly where we have a centre of learning, like the University of Waterloo. This is an important area where we need to grow our abilities to allow young people to connect with others, to share their ideas, to build off of one another's start-up companies or energy and to create a knowledge-based economy based on small businesses. This is the way of the future, and we need to be leaders in that area.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're going to return now to the member from Kitchener—Conestoga for his reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I appreciate the comments that were made by my colleague from Kitchener—Waterloo—we don't always agree, but we do get along well, and I'd like to thank her for her comments on that; as well, the member from Guelph; my great, good-looking colleague from Leeds—Grenville in eastern Ontario; and, of course, the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton. I think they raised some good points here.

I often hear the government talk about, "Oh, you're dragging on debate," and blah, blah, blah. But this was the first opportunity I had to speak to Bill 105. They believe that they should craft a bill, table it, speak a few minutes to it and then everyone sit down, and then it would just go away or get passed. I don't know where they get this notion. I know they've been around for 10 years, and we're hoping that will soon come to an end, but the notion of members being able to stand up and speak to a bill on behalf of their community—I shouldn't feel guilty by doing so. This government wants to always lambaste members for actually having the opportunity to speak to the legislation, and I just find that ridiculous.

I want to speak to some of the comments that my colleague from Leeds—Grenville picked up on. He talked about Bill 73, a bill that I introduced that was, unfortunately, defeated—for cynical reasons, clearly—a few months ago. That would have addressed a lot of the concerns that small businesses had in my community and in my region. In fact, I know the House leader himself has a brother who owns a fairly decent small business, and my bill would have helped companies like that out that will eventually be impacted for no other reason than their members don't hold a union card or are members of a different union. I know he's sitting beside the member from Hamilton, and the member from Hamilton can tell him of those concerns, because small businesses in his riding are forbidden from bidding on work in Hamilton.

I'll leave it there. I'd love to have more time, and I look forward to another opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

1750

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm proud to rise and discuss this bill. This bill proposes to merely tinker at the edges of what is the result of a decade of failed Liberal policies.

Small businesses in Ontario are feeling the pressure of increased energy bills, increased taxation and rising WSIB premiums. Over the past 10 years, the current government has condemned our most driven and innovative entrepreneurs to a slow death by a thousand cuts.

As with many bills before us in this Legislature, the government gives them catchy names that do not reflect the substance of the legislation, if there were any substance to it whatsoever. Supporting small business involves a consistent attitude that encourages success, drive, innovation and calculated risk. All the current government has done is to inflate the power of bureaucrats and implement redistributive schemes to pick winners and losers.

Being faced with the prospect of further rises in energy costs, prohibitive premiums, mountains of red tape such as the ones generated by the TSSA and uncertainty in the fiscal future of this province has forced many small business people to take their skills elsewhere. Moreover, the Liberals' policies have been driving certain industries to extinction, such as the skilled trades.

In order to appease their own stakeholders, the Liberals are imposing an unsustainable 3-to-1 apprenticeship ratio on small trades contractors. In my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, many tradesmen are unable to take on an apprentice simply because of this. When they retire, no one will be there to replace them. Entire family traditions are being wiped out and, with them, the province's and the municipalities' tax base. Any adviser would tell the government that in any population, a 1-to-1 ratio is barely suitable for replacement; 3 to 1 makes a shortage of skilled trades inevitable.

The current government's approach to small business, and its ways of milking them of their much-needed money are rooted in a deeply held yet wrong belief. The Liberals believe that despite the economic mismanagement, there will always be those willing to bail them out and those with no other choice but to pay.

But times have changed, and we have news for this government: It ain't so anymore. It's a competitive world out there, with open borders and businesses that can simply move, taking their jobs and their tax dollars with them.

Ontario's small businesses are not captive, and there are no barriers keeping them in the province. A small business is the best guarantee to good-quality local jobs that keep our communities thriving. Driving through our region, I see villages being held together by a common fabric resting on local employment. Encouraging and preserving a small-business-friendly environment goes beyond mere economics; it keeps our collective heritage alive.

Small businesses in Ontario must be free to set up, operate, expand, succeed, make a profit, hire, train, and sell their products and services throughout the province. Instead, we see a government focused on the interests of the bureaucrat, striving to control every aspect of economic activity and seize every dollar in the pockets other than their own.

Small businesses don't need just an extra \$50,000 exemption. They need this whole government's failed and discredited approach to administering this province to end.

In the case of this government, they also confuse political bailouts with economic ones. For all their

pandering to the public-sector-bankrolled Working Families Coalition, no amount of special-interest spending will bail out an economy being run at full steam into a debt hole that will place a \$30,000 debt burden on every man, woman and child in Ontario.

Never mind an extra \$50,000 exemption; ask yourself what you would do with an extra \$30,000. With \$30,000, you can hire local contractors to make your home more efficient and perform energy retrofits. And \$30,000 is a good down payment on a downtown Toronto condo or, even better, one on a much larger property in rural Ontario. And \$30,000 is also a decent sum of start-up capital for a small business. Moreover, \$30,000, in many cases, is a full-time wage.

Think about this: Just by tackling the debt, you would give every Ontarian a year's worth of wages. That would be a wholesale injection of true capital into the economy, and then small businesses would be the first to stand in line to reap the benefits.

Ontario needs real solutions to the challenges that our small businesses face and a paradigm shift in the government attitude to success and entrepreneurial spirit. If the government really wants to support small business, its best course of action would be to get out of the way. Let them succeed and expand without the pressure of climbing energy rates; allow them to hire without the apprehension of increasing premiums.

Small businesses are the trailblazers of our progress and economic recovery. They are demanding a true jobs plan. In a gesture of leadership, we've offered to the Liberals to clear the decks of legislation that had all-party support in order for this government to present a true long-term plan to create jobs and generate growth.

We only have 23 sessional days left before the House rises for winter break, and the time for tinkering around the edges is over. The absence of a true jobs plan from this government today is evidence that they are uninterested in truly helping small business and innovators to succeed in Ontario. As an example, we saw the latest bill they put on the table—although it has some merits—on the publishing of calories in chain restaurants, but really, is that a jobs plan? I don't think so.

On the other hand, the Ontario PC caucus had delivered a series of proposals and brought them out for the Ontario public to scrutinize, such as the proposal to fix the WSIB, reform the skilled trades to attract new blood and retain our experienced tradespeople, stop the artificial inflation of our energy rates and focus on our younger generation's skills to make them competitive in the 21st century. These are bold policy initiatives that Ontario businesses need to succeed in a modern, global, competitive marketplace.

A \$50,000 increase in the employer health tax exemption falls desperately short of the expectations of Ontario small businesses and those of the half a million Ontarians who still have no job to go to and no paycheque to help them sustain their families and to look

forward to a prosperous future. The government can claim whatever they wish regarding this bill; however, it cannot even qualify as a stopgap solution. Small businesses are being bled dry and this bill does nothing to stop the hemorrhaging. Any improvement in a business's balance sheet that may come from this increased exemption will be nullified in just a few months' time. The Auditor General highlighted that the energy rates would grow almost 50% between 2011 and 2015, and we're seeing these increases coming almost monthly. That increase alone is enough to undo all of the half-measures this government can hope to adopt to pretend to be on small business's side.

It's interesting: Today I was at a luncheon and Mike Harris was there. Businesses were very quick to point out how he took a situation much like today's from a government that really abused the situation and ran Ontario into the hole. In a very efficient and quick manner he turned this province around. He made it the biggest job creator on this continent. All it did was give this government the ability to bleed it dry until we're now back to even worse shape than we were back then. We've got a debt that's doubled since they took over. So really, they spent this amount of money and what do we have to show for it? We now have a situation where we have a public sector that is out of control as far as trying to be competitive. We talk about being competitive. You look at our neighbours to the south. These are people that have the same standard of living that we have. Their public sector is more competitive. How can you generate enough tax dollars to pay this group of people, pay their pensions? Their pensions are not funded. It's something that this government does not even want to entertain. I think that people deserve to know where their balances are in their pension plans and know if there's a problem.

By kicking that can down the road, as our leader often talks about, you're just making the problem much worse. We look at the city of Detroit, where people are now getting 10 cents on the dollar from their pensions. I think that's criminal. If we know that we're on the way to this, I think it's time to stand up, have a go—I hate to talk about another committee, because this government has been very good at creating committees. But in this instance we have to get in and not only identify the problem—I know they don't want to identify this problem—but I think we owe it to the people of Ontario, through the public service, to let them know what they need to do to make these pension plans soluble.

I think there are many things they can do, and we need to see some of these functions carried through by this government.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉES PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przedziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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